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Module 5

The Modern Play



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English 20

Module 5

THE MODERN PLAY



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Student Module
Module 5
The Modern Play
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Welcome to Module 5!

We hope you'll enjoy your study of
The Modern Play.

We've included a prerecorded
audiocassette with this module. The
cassette will help you work through
the material and it will enhance your
listening skills.

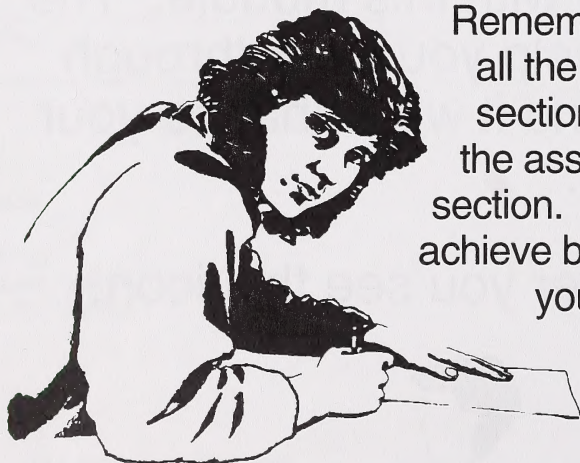
So whenever you see this icon,



turn on your tape and listen.

Since there are no response lines provided in the Student Module Booklets of this course, you'll need a notebook or lined paper to respond to questions, complete charts, and answer questionnaires. It's important to keep your lined paper handy as you work through the material and to keep your responses together in a notebook or binder for review purposes later. Read all the questions carefully, and respond to them as completely as possible. Then compare your responses with the ones supplied in the Appendix.

Some of your personal responses you'll be asked to keep in a separate folder – your Writing Folder. This is explained in Module 1.



Remember to work through all the activities in each section before attempting the assignment for that section. This will help you achieve better success in your studies.

Good luck.

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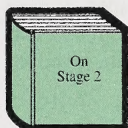
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MODULE OVERVIEW

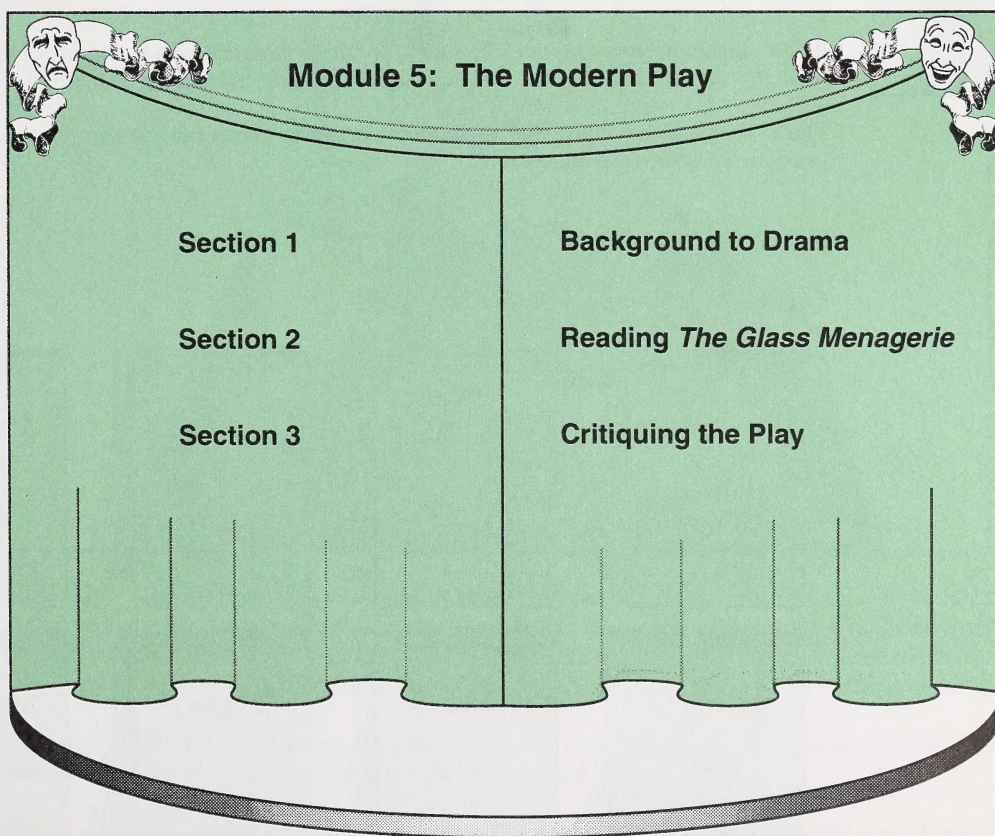


If you're like most people, you've watched a great many movies and television programs, but how many live plays have you seen? Most first-time playgoers are surprised at the intensity and sense of immediacy a live performance creates. It's easy to get hooked on live theatre once you've been exposed to it.

Reading a play is never as fulfilling an experience as watching one performed; after all, plays were written to be seen, not read. But in this module you should learn a good deal about the modern theatre and how to go about responding to a play both personally and critically. The module should help you to enjoy "seeing" a play through reading it. It should also help you understand how the theatre can enrich your life. Perhaps it might even inspire you to get involved in theatre yourself – maybe in a school or community drama group.



The play you'll be reading in this module is *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. You'll find the play in the textbook *On Stage 2*.



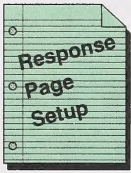
Evaluation

Your mark for this module will be determined by how well you complete the assignments at the end of each section. In this module you must complete three section assignments and one final module assignment. The mark distribution is as follows:

Section 1 Assignment	15 marks
Section 2 Assignment	20 marks
Section 3 Assignment	40 marks
Final Module Assignment	25 marks
TOTAL	100 marks

When doing your assignments, work slowly and carefully. If you're having difficulties, go back and review the appropriate section.

Read all parts of your assignment carefully. Plan and do your rough work on your own paper. Revise and edit your responses; then set up your final copy for submission on your own paper. Lined looseleaf is recommended. Make sure your answers are neat and organized, with wide left margins and space for teacher comments after each assignment.



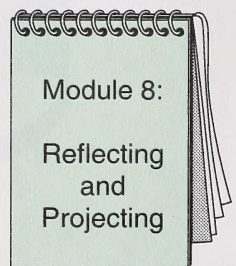
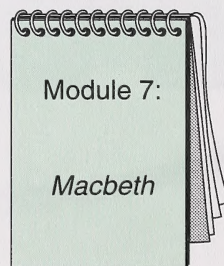
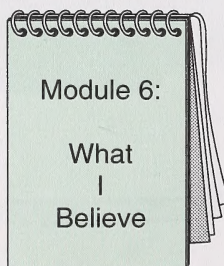
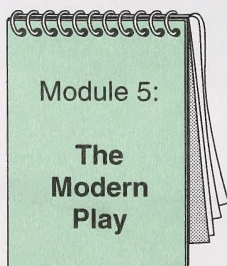
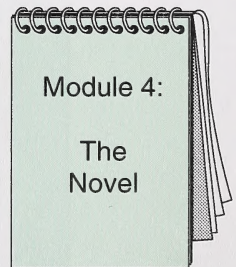
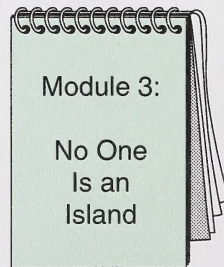
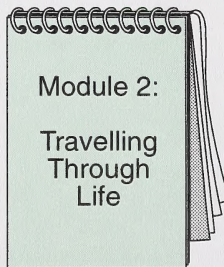
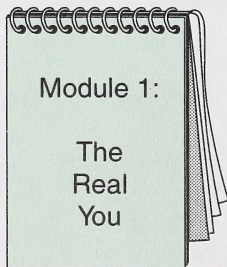
When you see this icon, ideas and details are provided to help you set up and organize your answer in a certain way.

Before submitting your responses, be sure to proofread them carefully to ensure that they say what you want, that they're neat and clear, and that they're complete and missing no material.

You'll be submitting **only** your **assignment response pages** (and in some cases an audiotape or videotape cassette) for evaluation.

COURSE OVERVIEW

English 20 contains eight modules.



SECTION

1

BACKGROUND TO DRAMA



Have you had the opportunity to see a play in a theatre – perhaps in your school or community theatre? If so, you know that you’ve seen something quite different from a movie or television program, even though similarities exist among all of these forms of entertainment. Have you ever watched the movie version of a novel you’ve read? Chances are you said afterwards that “It wasn’t like the book at all!”

This section will focus on looking at similarities and differences among plays, novels, movies, and television shows. It will also look at how a play is produced.

Before getting into Activity 1 it might be a good idea to go back and review what you learned about drama when you studied “A Trip for Mrs. Taylor” in Module 2. What follows in this module builds upon what was covered there.

Activity 1: Plays, Films, and Novels



In Module 4 you read a novel; now you're going to be asked to read a play. Seeing or reading plays may be a familiar experience for you, or it may be something rather unusual.



WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following ideas.

Before going any farther, think about your own feelings about watching plays as opposed to reading novels or watching movies on TV. Do you enjoy live theatre? Have you seen many plays performed? Do you have any built-in prejudices for or against live drama? Present your ideas on these or related questions in a short composition.

There are a good many similarities between novels and plays; for example, both have plot, characters, setting, and, most likely, a theme or main idea.

1. Can you think of other similarities between novels and plays? List your ideas.



There are also differences between novels and plays. For example, you usually read a novel by yourself whereas you see a play as a member of an audience. Further, you can usually read a novel at any time and in any place, and you can interrupt the reading whenever you like. But you must see a "live" play in its entirety, the intermission being the only break. As well, novels usually have minor plots in addition to the major ones; this is far less common in plays.

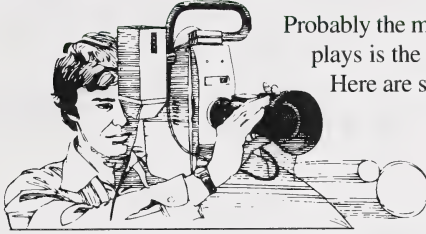
2. Can you think of other differences between novels and plays? List your ideas.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 1.

Now that you've thought about the similarities and the dissimilarities between novels and plays, turn your mind for a moment to the relationships existing among plays, novels, and TV shows. Reread your ideas from question 2 along with the ones presented in the paragraph that preceded that question. You can apply most of these ideas to television shows and movies; each such production involves a script, a director, a cast, a crew, a set, costumes, sound, and an audience. So in many ways a situation comedy and a movie are plays. Yet there are differences. What are they?

Differences Between Film and Plays

The Camera



Probably the most obvious difference between films (and TV shows) and plays is the presence of the camera. And what a difference it makes! Here are some things a camera is able to do that a play cannot.

- A camera can establish a sense of intimacy. For example, a play is unable to show an extreme close-up of your favourite actor's fist filling the screen aiming for your jaw. You won't get the same effect with a stage actor's fist. This illustrates that in some sense a camera can involve the viewer more directly in the action than can a play. The camera changes your perspective of a scene.
- A camera can also change the height of an actor. For example, if **low-angle shots** are used, actors may appear taller than they really are. This will almost certainly have a psychological effect on the audience. The actors will seem not only taller but also more powerful – more in command, as in the picture on the right (the correct lighting can also make them look sinister). Conversely, when actors are filmed with **high-angle shots**, they appear shorter and less threatening – and perhaps lonely.

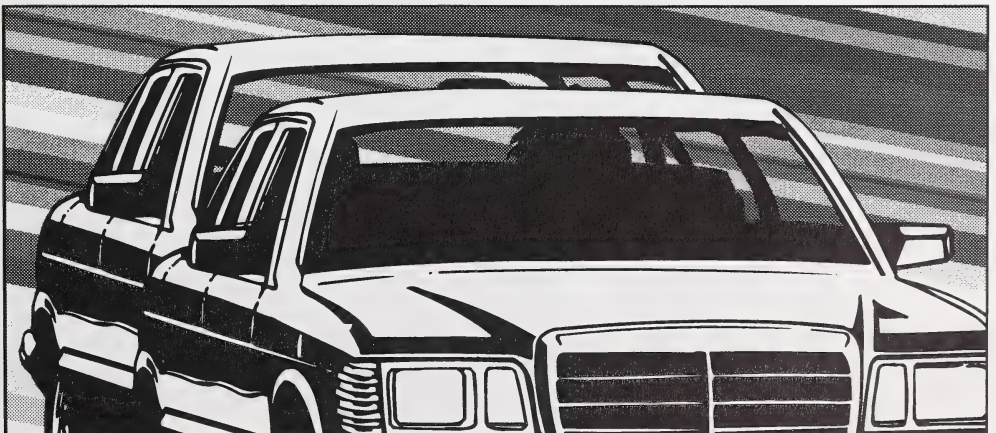


Low-angle shot:
a camera shot in which the camera is placed low in relation to the subject

High-angle shot:
a camera shot in which the camera is placed above the subject

Telephoto lens:
a lens that acts as a telescope to magnify distant objects

- A camera can affect distance. For example, a **telephoto lens** flattens perspective; that is, it puts the objects in the shot in the same, or almost the same, plane. Consequently objects appear closer than they really are. You'll find the telephoto lens used frequently in chase scenes. The effect on the audience is one of heightened suspense since the person doing the pursuing appears to be breathing down the neck of the one being chased.



Using a telephoto lens also affects speed. Objects moving toward the audience seem to take forever to reach their destination. (You may have seen this in televised baseball games when a pitched ball seems to move oh-so-slowly toward the batter.)

Wide-angle lens: a lens with a wide field of view, which increases the illusion of depth

A **wide-angle lens** has the opposite effect from a telephoto lens. It makes objects appear farther from each other than they really are. Movement also appears to be faster.

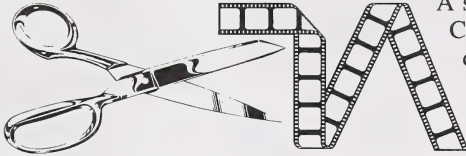
- Camera movement can affect perspective. A **pan shot** provides a good view of the entire setting – a countryside, for example. The camera can also **zoom** into or away from a scene or object, which affects how viewers see it.

Pan shot: a camera shot in which the camera is moved from one side of a scene to the other

The next time you go to a movie, pay attention to some of the effects the camera has on your perspective.

Editing

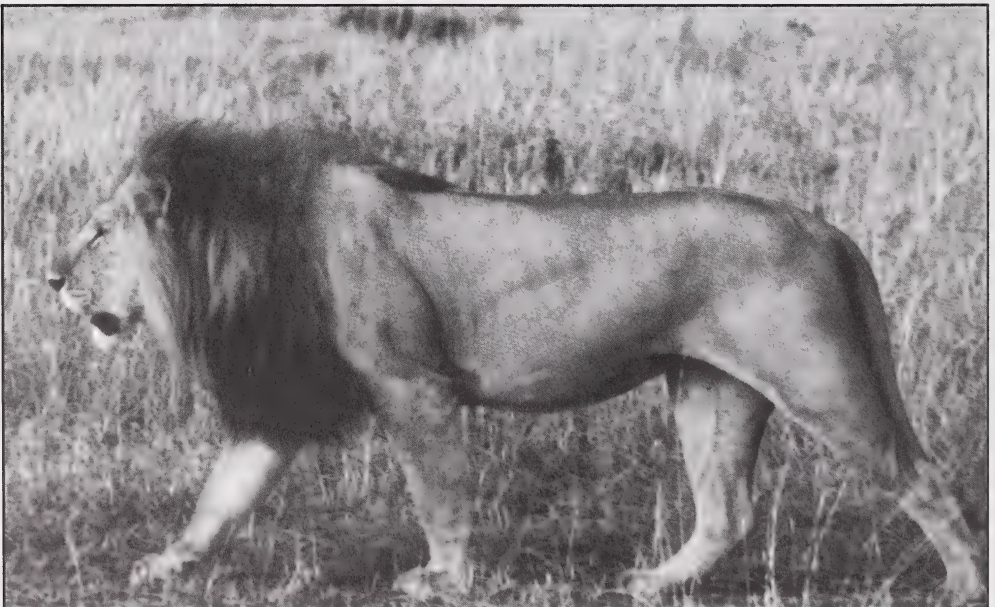
Zoom: adjust the camera lens during a shot to increase or decrease magnification



A second difference between films and plays is editing. Certainly directors of plays make changes (or edits) during rehearsals, but they can't do so to the same extent a film editor can. A film editor's job, working with the director, is to take the thousands of feet of film and, by cutting and **splicing**, create a polished movie that people will want to watch.

Splicing: joining two pieces of film

When you watch a play, you see everything in the proper sequence, as it was rehearsed. You also see the proper sequence in a film, but not as it was shot. For example, the final scene may have been shot early in production. The editor must splice that scene into the right place. Here's another example: a person in a fantasy film may open the door to a house in Calgary – and find an African veldt full of lions, wildebeest, and giraffes. By juxtaposing these shots, an editor can make the audience believe that such an event could happen. This feat is much harder to accomplish in a live performance!



Music

Another difference between films and plays is the use of music to create a certain mood. True, some plays are musicals, but in such productions music is used right up front as a central focus for the audience. Many filmmakers, by contrast, use carefully selected background music throughout their productions to intensify – and often create – the atmospheres they want.



WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following ideas.



1. Watch a movie, paying close attention to its music – when it's used, what sort is used, what its effect is. Describe the impact you think the use of music in this film had on you, the viewer. Be specific.
2. It's been said that good music in films compensates for – or even contributes to – bad acting. After all, if movie makers can create mood through music, they don't have to do it through acting.

Bearing this in mind, would you like to see less music in the movies you watch? Explain your ideas.

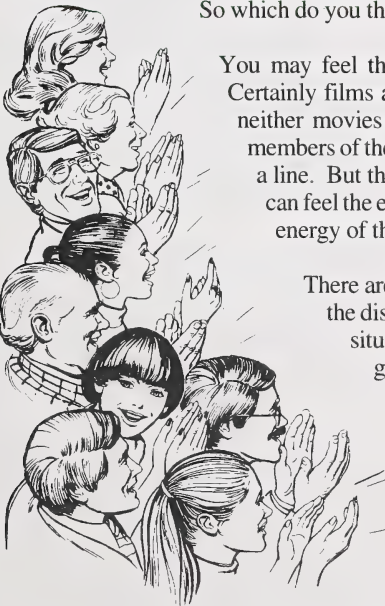
Plays Versus Movies – Pros and Cons

So which do you think you prefer – movies (and TV shows) or live plays?

You may feel that films are much more interesting and diverse than plays. Certainly films are more popular. But plays do provide a kind of magic that neither movies nor television can ever offer. During the run of a play the members of the cast are taking a risk every night. They may miss a cue or flub a line. But the compensation lies in the interaction with the audience. You can feel the electricity in the air, sense the energy of the audience feeding the energy of the cast, smell the sweat, hear the laughter – and the groans.

There are other advantages to seeing live drama. For example, think of the distractions that occur when you're trying to watch your favourite situation comedy: the phone rings, you have to take out the garbage, your parents ask you to do the dishes, your sister wants to change channels, homework looms, the dog has to go out – and so it goes.

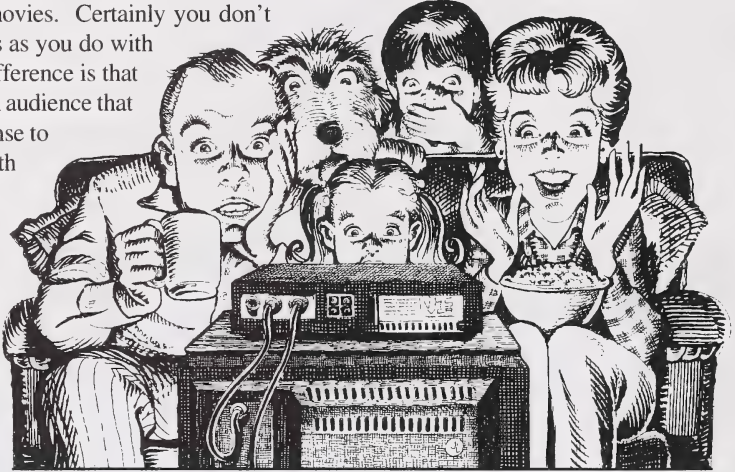
In other words it's very difficult to get totally involved in the program. Perhaps the only time there are no distractions is late at night when you're watching *The Night of the Living Dead* and you hear the floor creak in the hall. That's when you want to be distracted!



Or perhaps you're renting a video; then you can stop it whenever you wish, but you may not get back to it for several hours. Is it easy to get really involved when that happens?

The point is that despite the wonders a camera has to offer, you may find it difficult to get as involved with television as you do with a play.

This may also apply to movies. Certainly you don't have the same distractions as you do with television. Perhaps the difference is that you watch a movie with an audience that wants to be there – in a sense to share an experience with you. Consequently a movie tends to be more involving than television – as long as people around you don't chew their popcorn too loudly. That's another good thing about going to a play – no noisy eaters beside you!



Activity 2: Approaching a Play



Putting on a Play

How does a play spring to life? What happens after a budding director reads a script and shouts "I want to do this play!"? Some of what follows will restate in a different way some of the material you read and some of the responses you provided in the first activity.

Suppose that you want to direct a play. You've read a script that interests you; you've cast your friends and relatives in the various roles. You even have most of the costumes and the set design. Now what?

Here are the steps that usually occur in the process of bringing a play to life:

Playwright: the writer of a play

Step 1: You must decide how you're going to bring the script to life. The **playwright** is the creator; you, the director, are the interpreter of the creation. In other words, you're bringing your own unique interpretation of the playwright's dialogue and stage directions. Your interpretation will be different from anyone else's.

1. Imagine that you're directing a play in a one-act play festival. Someone from another school or town has entered the same play. Explain why the audience would see two quite different productions.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 2.

Step 2: Find a stage manager fast. A good stage manager will find the props you need, act on production notes you've written, help set the rehearsal schedule, prod the cast to be on time for rehearsals, refill the coffee pot, and provide the right amount of sympathy when nothing is going right. So choose somebody really dependable!



Step 3: The first rehearsal should be a reading of the whole play. You should also tell the cast how you interpret the play. Be prepared for discussion and lots of questions.

Step 4: Draw up a rehearsal schedule. Divide the play into fairly short sections. For example, pages 1 to 3 may be Section One, 4 to 7 Section Two, and so on. You'll then know exactly which sections you want to rehearse each night. Also, this way cast members who aren't in the sections you're rehearsing on a particular night can stay home and get a good night's sleep.

Step 5: Early in the rehearsal schedule tell the cast when you want them to be "off book" – that is, when you want them to have their lines memorized. Be fairly firm on this point. The sooner the lines are learned, the sooner the "acting" can begin.

Step 6: Decide how you want the lines delivered. You'll have a good idea already, but you'll also want to be flexible after listening to the suggestions of each member of the cast. (See the Tips for Reading a Play at the end of this activity.)

Step 7: Feel free to play around with stage directions. These are usually meant to serve as suggestions only. In almost every case you can change them to suit your purposes. Very rarely does a playwright insist that stage directions not be changed.

Step 8: Work with the sound and lighting people to decide what kind of music, sound effects, and light you want.



2. Think about the ways in which sound and lighting can be used when putting on a play. Explain why these two elements are important. Use specific examples.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 2.

Step 9: Be sure you know how and when each actor will move and how the actors will relate to the set. Many of these decisions you can make in consultation with the cast members. The most important point to remember is that every movement needs to be motivated; that is, an actor needs a reason to move to the fireplace, to pick up a magazine, to scratch an ear (especially someone else's ear). If there's no reason to move, then stay still. The biggest problem most actors have is deciding what to do with their hands. They often seem to get in the way.

Step 10: A few days before the play opens, you and the cast may have to take the time to set the lights properly if you have access to a lighting board. This means that the cast members get into their usual positions for each scene; then the lighting director adjusts the lights so that, for example, there are no shadows on faces (if that's what you want).

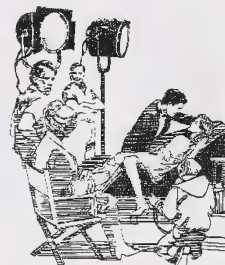


Step 11: It's time to see how your play works before a live audience, so invite some friends to your dress rehearsal. Use the dress rehearsal to correct all the little mistakes you never noticed before and to give the cast an audience to react to. For example, audience reactions may change the way certain lines are delivered, thereby affecting the pacing of the play. Sometimes what seemed to be a funny line in rehearsal is received in stony silence by the audience. Of course the opposite can occur too. You may wonder why the audience laughs at something you believed was rather sad. But it's reactions like these that make theatre such a lively experience.

Step 12: On opening night you may wish to follow the tradition by which the director gives small gifts and personal notes to everyone involved in the production. And you thought you didn't have to spend any money!

Step 13: After opening night the play belongs to the cast and stage manager. Don't try to change anything. Relax and listen to the applause.

Step 14: Here's an important point. Many actors have very healthy egos and easily bruised feelings. As a director you'll spend some time settling disputes and making people feel better. If your leading man doesn't know the first thing about kissing, you tell him that he's a terrific kisser, but maybe he'd like to try it another way. You may even have to demonstrate. Oh well, that's your job.



Of course much more is involved in directing a play than these fourteen steps. But they do provide an overview of what's involved. If you're ever in a position of putting on a play, you'll be surprised at just how much work it is. But what a payoff!

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following ideas.

Write the opening scene (a page or two) for a play based on **one** of the following situations:

- Two young strangers meet in a stalled elevator.
- A high school student, home alone at night, receives a number of interesting phone calls.
- Two people meet and fall in love. Their families disapprove.
- A girl receives information that changes her life.

If none of these ideas appeal to you, write the opening scene of a play based on a situation of your own choosing.

If you're uncertain how to begin, read the first few pages of any modern play you have available. For example, you might look back again at "A Trip for Mrs. Taylor" in Module 2.

When you've finished, read your scene aloud or assign roles to friends and tape your production.



Tips for Reading a Play

This activity has presented you with some ideas on how to go about staging a play. It might be a good idea to finish off with a few tips on how to read a play; after all, you may never be involved in an actual production, but in the next section you most certainly will be reading a drama.



Here, then, are a few ideas to make your reading both more profitable and more fun.

Monotone:
lacking expression
and variety of
intonation

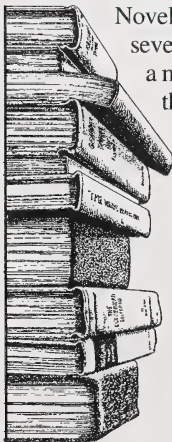
- When people read silently, they normally “hear” a **monotone** voice in their heads. That works well enough, perhaps, for newspapers, magazines, and essays, but not for plays. It’s important when reading a play that you bring the words to life. How loudly are the words spoken? How quickly? How clearly? What’s the proper pitch? Practise getting rid of that monotone voice inside your head.
- When people speak, they often pause or stammer. Many inexperienced actors don’t realize that the silence of a pause can be dramatically powerful. Experiment with silence. Don’t be afraid to stammer a bit when you think it would be natural.
- When reading a play silently, try to imagine what particular gestures might be used with the dialogue. This will help in the delivery of the lines. If you’re alone or reading together with a group, act out these gestures as much as possible.

Good luck with your reading!

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help



Novels, plays, movies, and television shows can enrich our lives. These four things have several important characteristics in common. All have plot, characters, setting, and usually a main idea or theme. All require an audience for completion. Most more or less follow the traditional plot structure that should be familiar to you from past English courses:

- exposition
- initial incident
- rising action
- turning point or falling action
- resolution

However, important differences do exist between the novel, play, movie, and television show. For example, novels are more portable; they’re easy to carry, and can be read almost anywhere. You’re much more restricted as to where you watch a play, movie, or television show.

Further, there are usually more distractions when you watch television than when you read a novel or see a play or a movie. A “live” play requires the combined efforts of many people working simultaneously; this tends to create an energy and sense of immediacy lacking in novels, movies, and TV performances.

1. Construct and fill in a chart like the one that follows. Show some of the differences between the novel, play, movie, and television show. A few have already been done for you.

	Audience	Performance	Other
Play	<i>The audience is more involved and shares energy with the cast.</i>		
Novel			
Movie		<i>It never changes; it's the same with each viewing.</i>	
Television Show			<i>The program competes with commercials for attention.</i>

2. When you see a play, you’re viewing the results of the cooperative efforts of a large number of people. Construct and fill in a chart like the one that follows.

	Roles and Responsibilities
Playwright	
Director	
Stage Manager	
Cast	
Lighting Designer	
Sound Designer	
Set Designer	
Costume Designer	

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Extra Help.

Enrichment

Do **one** or **more** of the following exercises.

1. Try adding stage directions to the dialogue on the clipboard that follows; that is, tell how the lines are delivered and how the actors move. Help to set the scene by giving a brief statement about who the characters are and how they feel about each other. An example is given.

Example:

(M is a seventeen-year-old who has been dating N. N wants to see someone else.)

M (cheerfully): Hello, N. Haven't seen you for a while.

N (moving away from M – uncomfortable): I can't see you now.

Now you try the same with the following: Use your imagination.

X: I'm home.

Y: It's nice to see you.

X: You too. I had quite a day.

Y: Tell me about it later. I'm busy.

X: Okay. Is D home yet?

Y: I think he's still at E's.

X: Oh.

Y: Will you please feed the cats?

X: Later.

2. Have you ever read a book and then seen the movie that was made from it? (Perhaps you did this in Module 4.) If you have, in a paragraph or two describe the major differences between the two. Try to account for the differences in your discussion. Remember, the changes were made for a reason.

3. Imagine **one** of the following scenes:

- Three people are walking across a school yard late one night.
- In a hospital waiting room a family is waiting for news of a close relative who's been in an accident.

For the scene you've chosen, select two pieces of music. One piece should provide the mood for the opening of the scene. The second should provide a change of mood or transition to another scene. Give the titles and the reasons for your choices.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Enrichment.

Conclusion

In this section you've looked at some of the similarities and differences between novels, plays, movies, and television shows. You've been given a brief introduction to the importance of the camera in influencing the way we see reality. You've also learned some of the important things to consider in directing a play. The activities and your work in your Writing Folder should have helped you to understand that you, as a reader, can help make a play come alive by using your active imagination and creating different voices in your head.

In the next section you'll begin work on the play *The Glass Menagerie*.

15

Section 1 Assignment: Background to Drama

Review the Evaluation information found in the introductory pages of this module.

It is important to number and clearly identify each page with the following information at the top:

English 20 – Module 5

Section 1 Assignment

Page #

Name and ID #

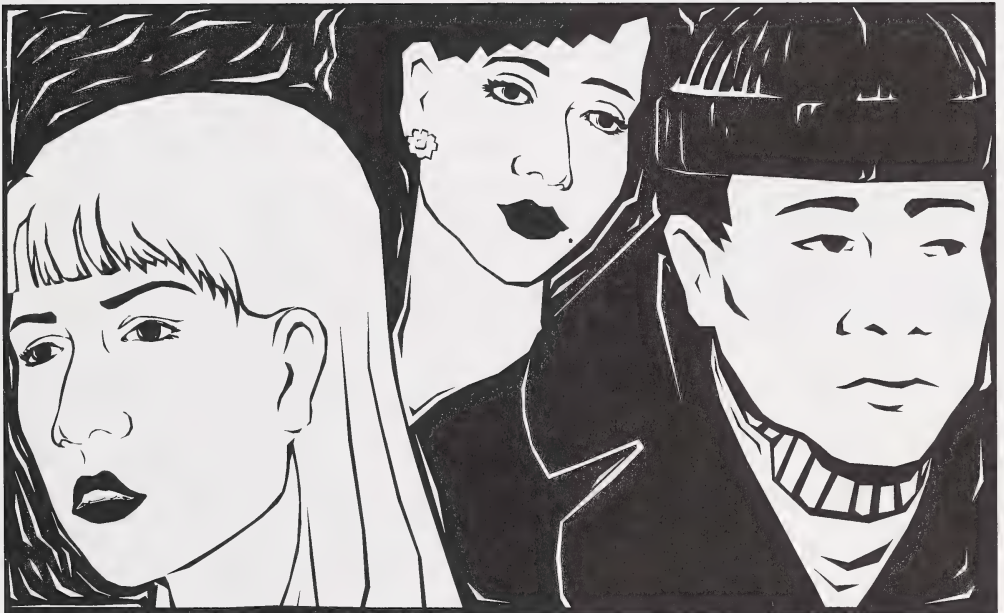
Be sure to write legibly. Leave a wide left margin and number all of your pages.

Go back over your Writing Folder responses in Section 1 and pick the one you like the most, which seems most interesting, or which you think has the most potential for development. Either rework that response into a finished composition by revising, editing, and polishing it or use it as a source of ideas for a new composition (which you will, in turn, revise, edit, and polish). Your response should be roughly two pages in length.

You'll be graded principally on the criteria laid out in the Scale for Evaluation of Expressive Language in Module 1, though, because this will be a polished piece of writing, such things as spelling and grammar will be considered as well.

SECTION

2

READING
THE GLASS MENAGERIE

You may well have heard of Tennessee Williams; he is, after all, one of America's most famous modern playwrights. You may even have seen a movie version of one of his more famous plays, like *A Streetcar Named Desire* (starring Marlon Brando), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (starring Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor), or *The Night of the Iguana* (starring Richard Burton).

The Glass Menagerie was the play that really launched Tennessee Williams' career. In it you'll find most of the topics that recur throughout his works – a compassion for people caught in situations beyond their control, an understanding of sensitive individuals unable to cope with the pressures of their lives, and a grief for the loss of a greater, more caring past.

Don't expect *The Glass Menagerie* to make you laugh or cause the adrenaline to flow; but if you read it carefully and actively, you'll be impressed by the play's power, and you should come away with a deeper awareness of some of life's rawer truths – an awareness you'll be able to demonstrate in your Section 1 Assignment.

As you read the play, remember the tips you learned in Section 1. Read for pleasure and for understanding, and try to bring the play to life in your mind as much as possible. You owe it to yourself to bring as much energy and life to the reading as you can. You'll get much more out of the play if you do.

Activity 1: Starting Points



Warming Up

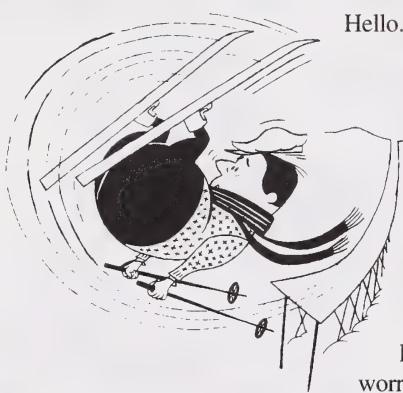
You'll begin your study of a modern play with a quick warm-up exercise. To get best results you should have a tape recorder. It would also be helpful to do the exercise with another person if possible.

What follows is a short, informal passage. Read it aloud in each of the ways suggested:

- in a neutral (or monotone) voice
- with great anger or fury
- as though what you are saying is the funniest thing you've ever said
- with deep sadness



Tape yourself as you read or get a partner to listen to you. Have some fun with this. Here's the passage:



Hello. I certainly hope things are going fine for you. Oh, that's good. As for me I can't complain. Of course I did break my leg skiing last week, but I should be off the crutches in three or four months. No, I couldn't use my car in any case; perhaps you've forgotten that it was wrecked in that hit-and-run a month ago. It may be a while before I can buy another one because of the break-in yesterday. I suppose I shouldn't have left my wallet on the coffee table. I can't even remember how many credit cards I had. Say, I don't suppose you could lend me a few dollars until payday? No? Well, don't worry about it. I still value you as a friend.

Now listen to yourself on tape or get your partner's response to what you read. How did you sound? Were you able to alter the whole feel of the passage with each reading? Did you enjoy taking a printed passage, interpreting it, and bringing it to life?

Here are a few questions you probably considered as you did each reading:

- How can you motivate yourself to get into the required mood?
- Who is your character? Is the character male or female? What is his or her age? occupation? economic and social standing? temperament?
- What is the character's relationship with the person being addressed?

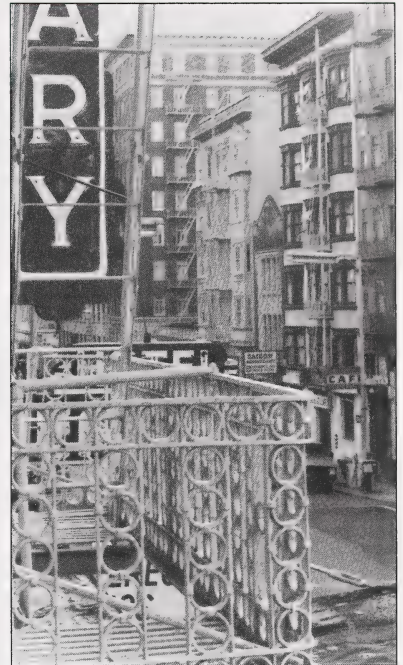
Now that you're warmed up and in the right frame of mind, it's time to get thinking about the play you'll be reading. A bit of background information on Tennessee Williams and *The Glass Menagerie* would be in order at this point.

Background Material

The Glass Menagerie is set in St. Louis, Missouri in the late 1930s. As you know, the 1930s was an era marked by the Great Depression, a decade of failed crops, thousands of bankruptcies, and massive unemployment. Missouri was not a wealthy state at the best of times, so it was particularly hard hit by the depression. A lack of money is important for the characters in this play. The time setting of the play is also significant because of the threat of war. Hitler had risen to power in Germany in 1933 and was becoming internationally aggressive. As well, the Spanish Civil War had begun in 1936; many people saw this as the forerunner of another world war. The threat of war created tension and also some sense of adventure among young people everywhere. Tom Wingfield, the **protagonist** of *The Glass Menagerie*, is no exception.

Protagonist: the main character in a story or play

You should also remember that the roles of women in society were much different in the 1930s than they are today. In that era women were expected to stay home and let their husbands provide for them. As well, young women were expected to marry by their early twenties and to have virtually no career expectations afterwards. A woman of twenty-five who was not married faced the awful prospect of becoming an “old maid.” As you’ll see, in some ways Amanda and Laura Wingfield, the women in the play, don’t fit the stereotypical image of women of that time.



Tennessee Williams was, throughout his life, profoundly affected by the squalor, misery, and spiritual poverty in which so many people in his society were forced to live. As you read *The Glass Menagerie*, you’ll experience some of the feelings of frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness of the members of the Wingfield family. As you read, ask yourself how much people’s lives have changed since *The Glass Menagerie* was written (it was first produced in 1945) and how much they’ve remained the same.

The Playwright



Do you know much about the novelists you read, or the playwrights whose plays you see? Chances are that most people know very little about them. People tend to think that novelists, playwrights, and poets are nothing more than their professions. In fact, of course, they are very much like other people, except that they’ve chosen writing as a career. They generally work hard at it and deserve the recognition of their readers. Besides, it’s always interesting to learn a little about any author whose work you read.

Turn now to page 52 of *On Stage 2* and read the section entitled “The Playwright.” It would be a good idea as well to reread the section entitled “The Play” on pages 52 and 53. When you’ve done that, do the Writing Folder exercise that follows.



WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following idea.

Before you've read any of *The Glass Menagerie*, describe in a paragraph or two what you expect the play to be like and how much you think you'll enjoy it. It will be interesting to come back later to what you wrote and see how accurate you were in predicting your response.

Activity 2: The Play



The Plot Structure

As you discovered from reading the introductory material in *On Stage 2, The Glass Menagerie* doesn't have a traditional plot line. Instead, it presents a series of episodes presented as flashbacks by Tom, the narrator. It's a memory or dream play; and as Williams himself said, it's unrealistic. Consider for example, how unrealistic or faulty your own memory is. (Of course, it's usually everyone else's memory that's faulty, not yours, isn't it?)

Tom, as narrator, steps out of the play to address the audience directly on several occasions. So you must remember that the episodes are presented from Tom's point of view, not Amanda's or Laura's.

1. Try to remember one significant incident in your life from each grade from kindergarten or grade 1 to the present day. If you were going to arrange these incidents to show the development of your character, would you string them one after another in **chronological order** or present them in clusters based on some common feature or perhaps loop them around a central theme that relates them all together? Or would you arrange them according to some other organizing principal? Explain your reasons.

Chronological order: the order in time in which events actually occur



Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

If the preceding question made you think a bit, you'll be better able to appreciate Williams's arrangement of events in *The Glass Menagerie*.

Symbols and Allusions

Tennessee Williams uses a number of symbols in *The Glass Menagerie*. These will be discussed in detail later, but try to list any symbols that you identify as you read the play. For example the title itself is a symbol. (Do you know what a *menagerie* is? Have you looked the word up in your dictionary?)



Allusion: in literature, a reference to someone or something with which the writer assumes the audience will be familiar

Along with symbolism, **allusion** plays an important role in *The Glass Menagerie*. You'll enjoy the play more if you understand the allusions in it. Allusions are references to things and people outside the play with which the playwright expects the audience to be familiar – something that sometimes isn't the case when the audience is reading or seeing a play several decades after it was written.

Certainly your comprehension and enjoyment of *The Glass Menagerie* will be increased if you understand what's being referred to. What follows is a list of allusions occurring in the play – along with the page numbers on which they first appear – that may not be familiar to you. Refer to the list whenever necessary as you work through the play.

- **Episcopalian** (page 57): a member of the Protestant Episcopalian Church, the American branch of the Anglican Church and Church of England
- **D.A.R.** (page 60): Daughters of the American Revolution, a patriotic society dedicated to promoting Americanization and guarding against suspected threats to American society
- **Lawrence** (page 65): D.H. Lawrence, British novelist and poet (At least one of his books, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was banned because of its explicit scenes.)
- **Garbo** (page 67): Greta Garbo, a very popular actress
- **Berchtesgaden** (page 73): Hitler's mountaintop retreat in Austria
- **Chamberlain** (page 73): Neville Chamberlain, prime minister of Great Britain, 1937-40 (He followed a policy of appeasement toward Hitler, believing that such a policy would bring "peace in our time." He was wrong.)
- **Guernica** (page 73): a town in Spain (Its destruction in 1937 by indiscriminate fascist bombing during the Spanish Civil War inspired a great painting by Picasso.)
- **Gable** (page 85): Clark Gable, romantic screen star
- **Benjamin Franklin** (page 89): eighteenth-century American statesman, scientist, and writer



Setting The Stage

Before really getting down to the business of reading *The Glass Menagerie* from start to finish, read the first scene including the description of the stage setting (pages 56 to 60). Pay close attention to the setting, milieu, mood, and character relationship as they're developed in Scene 1.

2. In Section 1 you looked at some of the things the director of a play has to do and consider when setting about the business of staging a play.

Imagine you're going to direct a production of *The Glass Menagerie*. Bearing in mind what you've read in the first few pages of the play, write a set of Director's Notes describing for your cast what you want the audience to know and feel from the milieu, setting, and dialogue that viewers will encounter as the play opens. What mood do you want to create?



Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

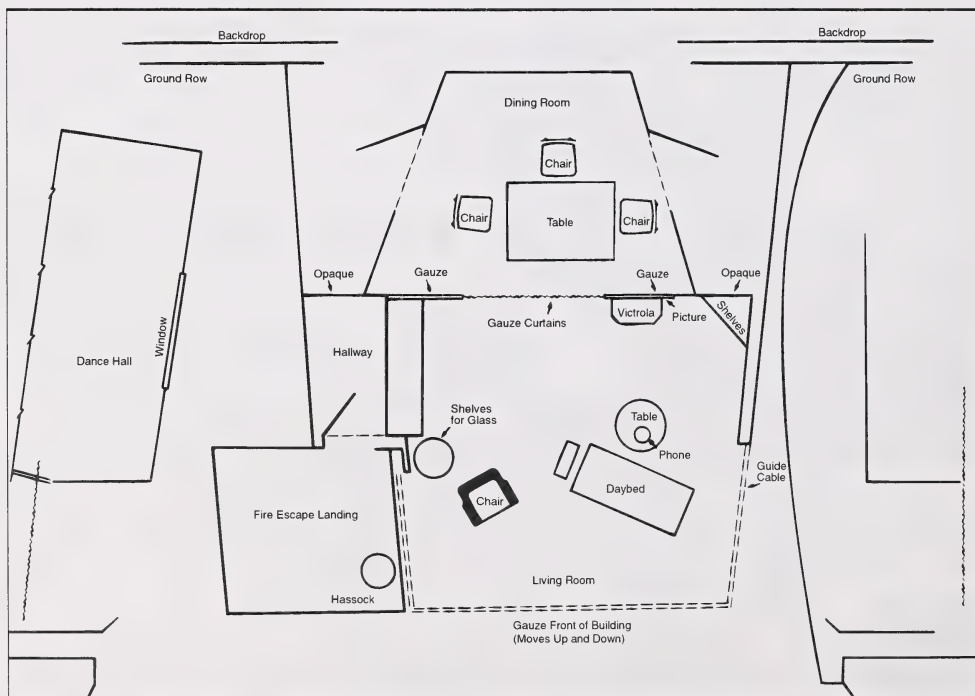
The Set

Set: in drama, the arrangement of a stage



A play's **set** design is simply the way the stage is set up and arranged. You've already read the description of the stage setting of *The Glass Menagerie*, and you may, indeed, have found it confusing. It is quite an elaborate setting; don't worry about all the details, but do try to get an idea of the mood Williams wants it to convey – a dreamlike atmosphere, vague in some respects, clear and distinct in others. The playwright himself tells us in the opening paragraph of his stage directions much of what the setting is meant to convey. Perhaps you should reread this paragraph (page 56 of *On Stage 2*) if you're unsure at this point.

Here's an overhead view of a standard stage setting for *The Glass Menagerie*. You may find it helpful to refer to it from time to time as you read; it might enable you to visualize the play better.



¹ Prentice Hall Canada Inc. for the stage design by Bob Cameron from *On Stage Teacher's Guide*, 1984, page 81. Reprinted by permission of Prentice Hall Canada Inc.

*Props: in drama,
the objects held
and used by
actors*

3. The set for *The Glass Menagerie* is very elaborate and makes use of a variety of **props** and effects. Suggest a few pros and a few cons for using such an elaborate set.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

Reading the Play – Act I

It's taken a long time, but you've finally reached the point where you can sit down, put your feet up, and read *The Glass Menagerie*. Since it's best to read a play rather quickly and in large chunks, you won't be interrupted with a lot of questions and exercises as you read each act.

However, you may find it helpful as you read to keep notes of your own. Here are a few ideas as to how you might organize your note taking:

- Plays are about characters in conflict. As you read this play, identify and keep notes on the conflicts, both major and minor.
- Plays are about character relationships, which can also include conflict. Keep notes on the various relationships in the play. You'll soon be asked to do a Writing Folder activity about characters.
- Plays are also about character development. Do Tom, Amanda, or Laura change as the play develops? Keep notes on any changes you see while reading.



Writing notes is a wonderful way of keeping your mind focused and ensuring that you're reading actively. As you read, feel free to jot down anything that strikes you as important; and don't forget to include page references. For example, you may want to note specific passages that indicate character development, conflict, or change of mood. Or you may note passages that you don't entirely understand. It's important that you enjoy the play, but it's also important that you're organized and that you're an active reader.

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following idea.

As well as taking notes, you'll probably want to respond personally to some of the things that go on in the play. For example, you might have strong feelings for or against things Tom or Amanda do or say. Or you might find yourself making predictions about things that will happen later.

Whenever this happens, take a few minutes to express your feelings in a short Writing Folder entry. You may be surprised on looking back at how your feelings changed and to what degree your predictions came true.



Now turn to page 60 of *On Stage 2* and read through to the end of Scene 6 of *The Glass Menagerie*. Try to find a quiet place and allow yourself good blocks of time if possible. Remember your play-reading tips and keep a critical eye open; but, above all, enjoy yourself. Try reading aloud, and in character, if possible. It really does help.

When you've read the first six scenes, go through the dialogue that follows.

Well, quite the family, the Wingfields. What's your impression of Amanda so far?

Can you suggest why she acts this way?

Would things be better if she didn't try to control her children so much?

I think you've identified the key conflicts. Perhaps you should get them down in point form now. Also, considering the mood of the play so far, do you think that the "gentleman caller" will be the Wingfields' saviour?

I think she's bossy and talks too much.

I think that she's highly-strung because she's scared of the family's future.

It's hard to say. But Tom needs to get away from her for a while. I don't think Laura has the experience to look after herself. She's frightened of the real world.

If he is, then I think that Tennessee Williams has copped out.



4. Now turn to "Consider the Play" on page 104 of *On Stage 2*. Read through questions 1 to 10 and think about how you'd answer them. Write out your answers to numbers 2, 6, and 9.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to **one** or **both** of the following ideas.

1. You've met the three members of the Wingfield family and understood something of what makes each one "tick." Select **one** of these three characters and describe your feelings about him or her. Do you understand the character? Do you sympathize with him or her? Do you identify at all with your chosen character?
2. How do you react to the way the play is organized – with Tom as narrator and scenes fading in and out like old memories? Would it be effective on a stage? Can you think of ways in which things could be improved?

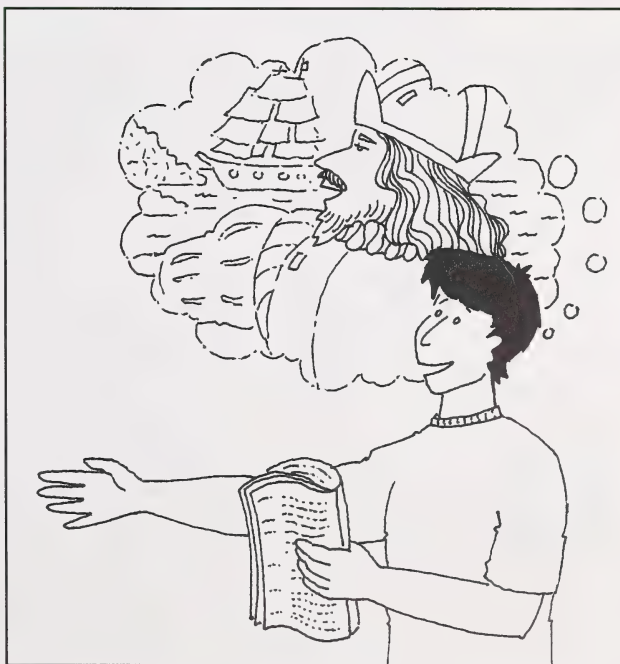
Reading the Play – Act 2

Now turn to page 80 of *On Stage 2* and read the remainder of *The Glass Menagerie*. Remember to keep up your note making as you read; but, above all, enjoy the play.

When you've finished reading the play, go on to the next activity.

Activity 3: After the Play

Remember that all plays are written to be performed; you can enjoy them fully only by seeing a live performance. However, if you read this play with energy and if you tried to become your character, then you probably enjoyed the experience. You should be looking forward to seeing either a live production or a video of the play. If you do get the chance, you'll find that your concept of what the play should be like will have many similarities with the play you watch; but there will likely be some striking differences. As you discovered in Section 1, those differences are to be expected.



A Personal Response

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to **one** or **both** of the following ideas.

1. Describe your reaction to *The Glass Menagerie*. Consider the following questions:

- Did you like it?
- Did you dislike it? Why or why not?
- How did you react emotionally?
- What was the best scene?
- Which characters appealed to you?
- What didn't you understand?

Of course you aren't limited to these suggestions.

2. Become one of the characters in the play. As that character write a letter to a friend or relative summarizing what's happened to you in the year since the gentleman caller left. Explain your emotional state, your economic situation, and your relationship with the other characters.

A Critical Response

You've now completed an initial reading of the play. You may well have some questions you'd like to discuss with others. You probably jotted down such questions as you were reading. Some of the questions on pages 104 and 105 of your text may be similar to the ones you've asked yourself. And if they're not, these questions should still help you think about the play and perhaps see aspects of it you hadn't considered before. The answers to these questions don't provide all there is to know about the play, but they're a good start. Though in what follows you're asked to write out answers to only three questions, try to take the time to think about all of them – and if possible to discuss them with someone else, perhaps a fellow student or your learning facilitator.



Now turn again to “Consider the Play” on page 104 of *On Stage 2* and read the remaining questions (11 to 20). Think about how you'd answer all of them. Write out your answers to questions 14, 15, and 16.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 3.

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help

In this section you've learned some things about what Tennessee Williams wanted to say in many of his plays. The following points should help you review what *The Glass Menagerie* is about.

- The time setting of the play is important. People are strongly influenced by the economy and the values held by society. *The Glass Menagerie* is set during the Great Depression, when unemployment was very high; young men and women were not optimistic about the future and wanted to escape from their economic plight. At that time, too, women were not treated as equals. Nor were they expected to have jobs once they married; instead, they were to look after the home and raise the children. Women who never married were generally regarded as unsuccessful. That's why Amanda tells Laura that "All pretty girls are a trap and men expect them to be traps."
- Tom Wingfield is a very frustrated young man. He regards himself as a poet and adventurer. He wants to escape his boring, meaningless job in the warehouse. His means of escape is going to the movies.

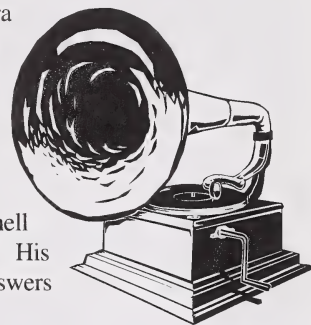
Tom also wants to escape the responsibility of being the only breadwinner for his mother and sister. He loves them both but resents the fact that Amanda wants to control his life and won't accept that he's a grown man.

Eventually he does leave but is obviously not happy; the image of Laura pursues him wherever he goes. In some ways Tom is like his absent father, the man who "fell in love with long distance."

- Amanda has a difficult life. She loves her children and wants them to be happy. At times she seeks her own happiness by recalling her girlhood as a pretty southern belle courted by as many as seventeen "gentlemen callers." Now she tries to recapture that time in two ways: by selling subscriptions to magazines containing stories of romantic and tragic love and by wanting Laura to have gentlemen callers too. This is also Amanda's means of escape. She's a well-meaning person but a frustrating one. Her unhappiness and fears for her family's future cause her to nag Tom constantly about his job, his movies, and his failure to find a gentleman caller for Laura.
- Laura also needs to escape. She's terrified of the "real" world, so she retreats from it to a world of music and glass animals, her menagerie. The animals are fragile and can be seen properly only when held up to the light. Laura, too, is fragile. The proper light for her is candlelight; in it she is allowed to be herself, delightful and charming. Her favourite glass animal is the unicorn. It's unique because of its horn. Laura is also unique; she has a limp and was called "blue roses." When Jim breaks the unicorn's horn, Laura says "Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones who don't have horns." For a short time Jim makes Laura feel more at home, more like the "normal" girls, more like a "real" person.
- Jim, the gentleman caller, is supposed to be the answer to Amanda's dreams, someone who will marry and look after Laura. Jim is a nice but shallow young man. In high school he was very popular and was voted the boy most likely to succeed. However, he hasn't gone very far; he has a job only slightly better than Tom's. He has some ambition and is concerned mainly for himself. He doesn't mean to hurt Laura, but he's clumsy in his speech and manner. Consequently he attempts to build her confidence, but in the end he shatters her hopes, just as he shatters the unicorn.

Following is a series of questions designed to test – and expand – your understanding of the play. See how well you can answer them.

1. In his opening comments in Scene 1 Tom, as narrator, says “I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.” What does he mean by this?
2. The stage directions in Tom’s first speech tell us that “Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils.” Why is this fitting for the way in which the play is presented?
3. When Amanda confronts Laura with her discovery that Laura hasn’t been pursuing her studies at Rubicam’s Business College, Laura unconsciously crosses the room to the victrola and winds it up. Why is this an almost automatic reaction for her?
4. Why is “Blue Roses” an appropriate nickname for Laura?
5. At the end of Scene 4 Tom asks himself a question: “But who in hell ever got himself out of a coffin without removing one nail?” His question is answered. Explain how Williams effectively answers Tom’s question.
6. a. In Scene 5 Tom apologizes to Amanda for things he’d said. He no sooner apologizes than Amanda becomes her old, nagging self: “. . . don’t gulp! . . . Put cream in.” Tom and Amanda start to talk about Laura’s problems, but then begin to discuss Tom’s restlessness instead. The differences between mother and son are clearly shown by their disagreement over the word *instinct*.



With what does Amanda associate this word?

- b. Why does she define the word in this way?
7. When Laura’s gentleman caller finally arrives, he turns out to be a young man she’d been attracted to in school. What does Jim reveal about his own character when he mentions things in his conversation like “Dizzy Dean,” “swing music,” “bill of goods,” “square up,” and “you dip”?
8. In Scene 7 Amanda acts and dresses as she did as a girl. Why does she do this?
9. How does Tom, as narrator, indicate at the end of the play that he’s not remorseless about leaving his family?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Extra Help.

Enrichment

Do **one** or **more** of the following exercises.



1. With classmates, friends, or relatives tape two readings of part of Scene 8. Make one of the readings melodramatic – that is, emphasize the sadness, the potential romance. Make it a soap opera. For the second reading, pretend the play is a comedy. Experiment with your voices to get a comedic effect.



2. If you're working in a group and have a video camera, reenact one of the scenes in the play and tape yourselves. You should reread the part in Section 1 that explains how a camera affects the viewer's perspective.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Enrichment.



Conclusion

You've now worked your way through one of the twentieth century's most famous plays. You've looked at the playwright, you've become aware of allusions in the play, you've examined the stage setting, and you've immersed yourself in the quietly desperate lives of Tom, Laura, and Amanda Wingfield. In the next section you'll dig deeper into the play and do some serious critical analysis.

Section 2 Assignment: Reading *The Glass Menagerie*

Review the Evaluation information found in the introductory pages of this module.

It is important to number and clearly identify each page with the following information at the top:

English 20 – Module 5

Section 2 Assignment

Page #

Name and ID #

Be sure to write legibly. Leave a wide left margin and number all of your pages.

The Glass Menagerie is an unusual play in several respects; for example, it's set up as a series of memories; it has a narrator who addresses the audience; it isn't divided into three acts; it has little action.

In your opinion how well does the play work? What did you like about it? What would you change? Defend your ideas with direct references to the play itself. Your response should be roughly two pages in length.

SECTION

3

CRITIQUING THE PLAY



Have you ever seen a movie and really enjoyed it, only to read a scathing review by some professional critic the next day advising the public not to waste their money on this “bomb”? If you’re like most people, you’d really love to be able to do your own counter-review in such a situation.

In this section you’ll get your chance to do some critiquing and analysing of your own. When you’re through, you should have a good, solid understanding of *The Glass Menagerie* and you should, as well, have sharpened your own critiquing skills. You’ll be able to demonstrate these skills in both your Section 3 Assignment and your Final Module Assignment.

Activity 1: You the Critic



The Art of Criticism

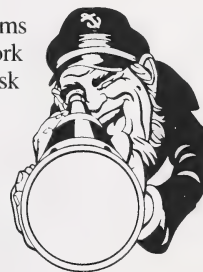
As a critical, active reader, no doubt you have questions, concerns, and criticisms about the play you've just read.

Perhaps you made some inferences that were incorrect; perhaps you didn't like some of the dialogue; perhaps you didn't like the playwright's view of life. Perhaps you would have done some things differently. Now you'll have an opportunity to express your opinion of the play at greater length than before.

In Module 2, Section 5, you looked at the business of reviewing – or critiquing – movies and plays in newspapers or magazines. You'll remember that in this context the word *criticism* loses its normal negative connotations; it simply means a response that probes a production actively and intelligently, pointing out what seems good and what seems to need more work.

When you examine anything with a critical eye, you should compliment what seems good and comment on things that you feel need improving. A critical study of a work of literature asks that you examine it closely. Criticism also means that you ask questions. Here are typical examples:

- Why did character X say this?
- What was character Y's motivation for doing that?
- What would have happened if character Z had done this instead?
- What was the playwright's intention in writing the play?



Good reviewers, of course, always back up their critiques with evidence and examples from the productions they're reviewing.

An important thing to remember is that people can enjoy almost anything at different levels. For example, driving a car is pleasurable for most people, but some find a deeper pleasure from knowing how the engine and drive train work. That gives them another level of understanding. Many people are content to know the basics of operating a computer, others need to know exactly how it works so they can become successful "hackers." The purpose of becoming a critic is to take you to a deeper level of understanding and consequently a deeper level of pleasure.

The Armchair Critic



In Section 5 of Module 2 you reviewed a feature film on audiotape. If it's been a while since you did this, take a few minutes now and go back and look over what you did then.

That experience probably taught you that significant criticism occurs only when you examine the movie, television program, or play you're reviewing in some depth. With this in mind, it's time now to look more closely at *The Glass Menagerie*.

When you began your study of this play, you were asked to read the opening scene and write a set of Director's Notes in which you described what you wanted the audience to know and feel from the milieu, setting, and dialogue with which the play opened.

Now you'll be asked to reread a few other passages to learn more about what the play is saying and how the playwright structured it. You'll discuss such aspects as organization, motif, character development, mood, symbol, and theme.

The Play's Organization



What do you notice about the preceding picture? One obvious thing is that the people in it are in disarray; they aren't organized. They don't know who's next, how many tickets remain, or whether they'll get one. So they need to be organized. The same applies to literature.

You already know about the importance of organization in any literary work; in Module 1 you looked at the use of organizing principles in writing. At the very least a story, novel, movie, television program, and play need a beginning, middle and end. Without any one of these, the reader/audience wouldn't know what the characters are doing or where they'll end up. Authors use a variety of methods to organize their work.



How did playwright Tennessee Williams organize *The Glass Menagerie*?

Division of the Play into Scenes

First of all, Williams didn't use the usual three-act format of most modern plays. Rather, he used eight scenes, representing important episodes in the lives of the Wingfields. There is a division of acts between Scenes 6 and 7, but this serves chiefly just as a spot to give the audience an intermission.

Tom as Narrator

Connected to Williams' division of the play into eight scenes is his use of Tom as narrator. Tom is able to select those scenes or episodes that are important for him and his family. He introduces Scenes 1, 3, 6, and 7, helping the audience by setting up these scenes. This technique also provides smooth transitions, helping unify the play.

The Use of the Motif



Motif: an idea or image that recurs throughout a piece of literature



Another, perhaps less obvious, method of organization is the use of the **motif**. A motif (a term you encountered in your assignment for Section 3 of Module 4) is an idea or image that recurs throughout a work of literature (or works of literature). The purpose of a motif is to help unify the work and to reinforce the theme. People use motifs in their daily lives to help keep them organized. For example, many people repeat the same pattern daily; they may walk the dog at a certain time or take their car to the same service station.

There are a number of motifs in the play you've just read. One, for example, is the constant recurring reference to "gentlemen callers" – those knights in shining armour, one of whom Amanda always hopes will arrive and rescue Laura from the life she now leads.

1. Perhaps you'll never dance to the hot beat at the Paradise Dance Hall or join the merchant marines for adventure, but here's the next best thing. With another person if possible, find, write down, and briefly discuss a few motifs you've noticed in the play. What ideas do the motifs seem to reinforce?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

Symbolism in *The Glass Menagerie*

Very closely related to the use of motifs is the presence of symbolism in *The Glass Menagerie*. Speaking through Tom, as narrator, Tennessee Williams says that he has "a poet's weakness for symbols" – a claim that seems borne out in the play.

In Module 3 a symbol was defined as "an object, person, or event that has a meaning greater than its literal meaning." A symbol, then, is something that means more than itself. For example, a red rose is a symbol of love and passion, meanings that go beyond the rose as just a flower. To understand *The Glass Menagerie* at a deeper level than just one reading usually permits, you need to know something

about the significance of the symbols in the play. In Section 2, Activity 2 you were asked to list any symbols you noticed as you read the play. You can review this list now, and at the same time look for more.



Here are a few of the more prominent symbols in *The Glass Menagerie*. Bear in mind that symbols and motifs are very closely related. Some of the motifs you looked at in question 1 have great symbolic meaning in the play.

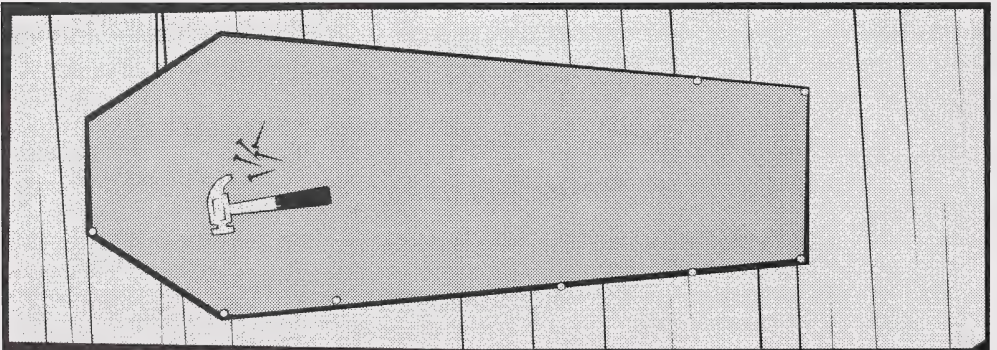
One of the most important symbols in *The Glass Menagerie* is the fire escape. For Tom it seems to symbolize the possibility of escape from the family and responsibilities that trap him.

What does the fire escape symbolize for Laura? Unlike Tom, she wants to escape from, not into, the outside world. Did you notice how Laura tripped on the fire escape when Amanda forced her to go to the store? This seems to symbolize the difficulty she has facing reality.

Another symbolic element in the play is light. The whole play is dimly lit, reflecting the dim hopes the Wingfields have for happiness. The light from the Paradise Dance Hall symbolizes adventure, romance, and excitement. Candlelight symbolizes softness and romance, but also an air of unreality (quite fitting for Laura). When the lights go out during the dinner with Jim, this symbolizes the extinguishing of hopes for a married, happy future for Laura.

Williams also uses music symbolically in the play. When you read the stage directions, you no doubt noted that the music cue was one of the most often given. When Laura retreats from the real world, she turns to her phonograph records, a symbol of protection and escape into her own world. The music from the Paradise Dance Hall repeats the motif of the light it reflects. The music, then, symbolizes the mood of the moment.

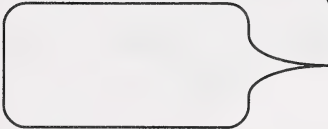
Another important symbol is that of the movies to which Tom so often goes. The movies motif is a symbol of escape for Tom, away from the humdrum life at the warehouse and at home. They represent for Tom the life of excitement and adventure for which he longs.



2. Using the direct hint of the preceding graphic and what you know about the motifs in *The Glass Menagerie*, suggest appropriate responses for the empty bubbles that follow.



What do you think the coffin symbolizes?

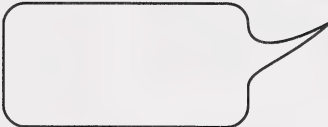


Good. Now does the picture of Amanda's husband symbolize anything?

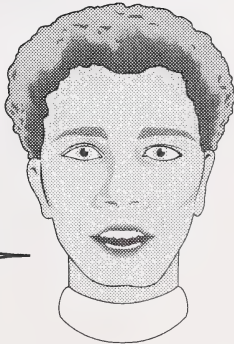
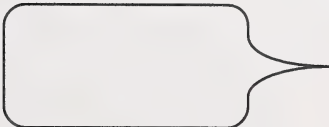
It has to; otherwise you wouldn't have asked.



Good insight. So please explain.

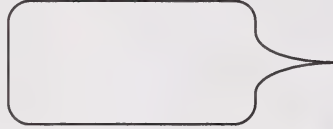
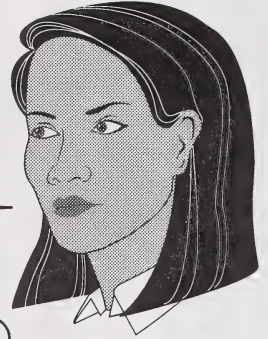


And the gentleman caller for Laura – along with Amanda's gentlemen callers?

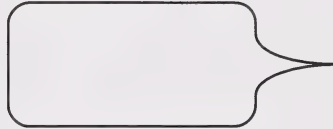




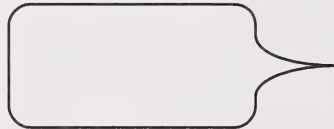
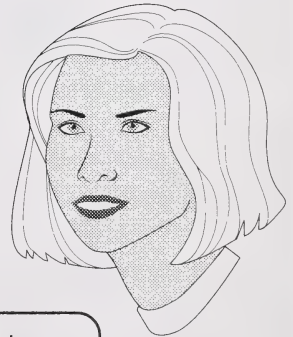
Symbols sure are fun, aren't they? How about money as a symbol?



Excellent. You're really bubbling along. Here's a toughie – Laura's glass menagerie, especially the unicorn.



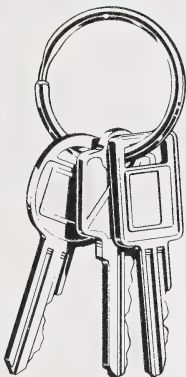
Well done. Can you think of any other symbols?



*Good work. I think it should be clear from all of this that symbols play an important part in *The Glass Menagerie*. Now it's time to go on and see what can be learned from the play by looking more closely at key passages.*

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

Key Passages and Character Development



The preceding heading is a little misleading. In a well-written play, all passages are key. But for the purpose of a close reading of the play, key passages will be those which reveal character, mood, and theme. Many passages in *The Glass Menagerie* are worth a close reading.

Passages revealing Amanda's character can serve as an example of this. Readers can, indeed, learn a good deal about Amanda by comparing different passages. In Scene 1 Amanda appears to be a tiresome nag. She teaches Tom, a grown man, how to use the utensils properly, she explains why human beings rely on "mastication," and she expects Tom to "chew, chew – chew!" Tom's reaction indicates that this nagging is common. Amanda seems fond of reminiscing about the seventeen gentlemen callers she received one Sunday afternoon. Tom's reaction to this is "Again?" Amanda appears to be a romantic living in her past.

At this point in the play Amanda appears to be in complete control of her "children," telling them exactly what to do. As well, she seems to be optimistic about Laura's receiving gentlemen callers.

In Scene 5 Amanda's character is further developed. She still controls Tom by waiting until he apologizes for having called her a witch earlier. She also plays the martyr role very well, saying "My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children" and "You know I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years." But she can quickly become very enthusiastic about the future; she's always making "plans and provisions." She's also willing to work in demeaning jobs if it will help her family. She has to swallow some of her southern-belle pride in order to sell magazine subscriptions by telephone to acquaintances.



Scene 7 provides more understanding of Amanda's character. Her view of young women is quite traditional. She tells Laura that "all pretty girls are a trap and men expect them to be traps." When Jim, the gentleman caller, arrives, Amanda becomes for a time a girl again, wearing a dress she had when she was very young. She seems to flirt with Jim a little, probably reliving her girlhood. She talks incessantly to him because she believes men are attracted to girls who know how to talk. At the same times she flaunts Laura's attributes in front of Jim, telling him that "It's rare for a girl as sweet an' pretty as Laura to be domestic!" She also sets up Jim and Laura's romantic interlude, even providing the candles.

But it's in the final moments of the play that Amanda becomes fully developed for the audience. In the stage directions before Tom's final speech, Williams writes "Now that we cannot hear the mother's speech, her silliness is gone and she has dignity and tragic beauty . . . Amanda's gestures are slow and graceful, almost dance-like, as she comforts her daughter."

So for most of the play you may have found Amanda to be a difficult person. She nags, bosses, talks too much, dominates, and appears flighty. Yet her actions are motivated by love and desperation. She truly wants her children to be happy, but fears for their future so much that she does, indeed, act foolish at times. But at the end of the play the audience has also come to admire her strength, dignity, and compassion – attributes that were always there but which surfaced only at the play's unhappy conclusion.

What do you conclude about this closer look at Amanda? Perhaps you've decided that people shouldn't be judged until all the evidence is in. You still might not want to be around Amanda very much; however, you've seen that she has admirable qualities. If only she wouldn't nag so much!

3. There are many passages in *The Glass Menagerie* that reveal something important about character, mood, and/or theme. If possible, get together with other students in a small group and find **two** or **three** such key passages. Discuss the significance of each – that is, what it reveals about character, mood, theme, and so on. If you're working alone, think critically about your selected passages and on an audiocassette tape your ideas about what they reveal.



Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

Note: One of your assignments will ask you to select a key passage from the play and write a critical composition on it.

Theme and Conflict

In Module 3 *theme* was defined as "the central idea or insight about life that emerges from a piece of literature." All memorable literature has something to say about the human condition, about what makes people the way they are. Mind you, if an author wants to say that people are generally peculiar, he or she could say so directly and then cite some examples. However, most significant literature does not use so direct an approach. Instead, the reader derives the theme indirectly, by observing characters in conflict. Themes arise out of conflict. It's conflicts and their resolutions that readers can reach conclusions about by witnessing the human condition. Such is the case with *The Glass Menagerie*.



No doubt you've done a lot of work on analysing conflicts in works of literature – and classifying them – in past English and language arts courses. What follows are a few conflicts you probably noted in *The Glass Menagerie*.

- Tom experiences an internal conflict between his desire to escape from his family and his sense of responsibility for the members of that family (person-versus-him/herself).
- Amanda and Tom are in conflict in that she wants him to stay with his family, keep his job, and be a responsible breadwinner while he longs for a life of freedom, adventure, and creativity (person-versus-person).
- Amanda and Laura are in conflict. Amanda wants Laura to learn to support herself or develop the charm Amanda feels is necessary to attract a husband; Laura, by contrast, is afraid of the outside world and wants to stay hidden in her protective shell (person-versus-person).
- The Wingfield family is in conflict with the society that has forced its members to live lives of “quiet desperation” (person-versus-society).



WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder express your own thoughts and feelings about Tom's internal conflict. Which side would you have liked to see win?

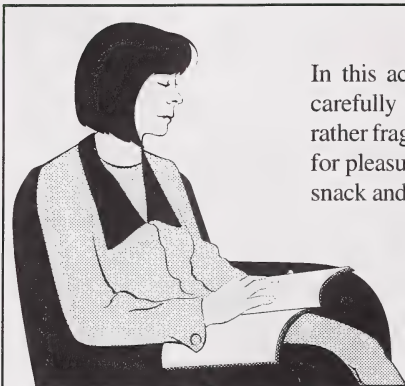
What then, is the theme of *The Glass Menagerie*? What have you learned from the conflicts in the Wingfield family? How do the symbols and motifs support the theme? These are some of the questions that should come to mind when thinking about theme.

4. Write down what you consider to be the theme (or themes) of *The Glass Menagerie*. (If you can discuss the matter in a small group first, so much the better.) Remember, when you state a theme, express it in a complete statement that actually says something; don't just present a topic. For example, “poverty” is a topic while “Poverty can trap people in a cycle of hopelessness” is a statement of theme.

This is a difficult question, so don't be discouraged if you have problems with it. Do your best.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

An Invitation to Reread the Play



In this activity you've examined *The Glass Menagerie* quite carefully and – unavoidably when it comes to analysis – in a rather fragmented fashion. Now you're invited to reread the play for pleasure and more understanding. Go ahead. Read. Have a snack and soft drink, sit back, and enjoy!

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following:



Turn to page 104 *On Stage 2* and read questions 17 and 19. Select **one** of these questions and write a response in a composition of three or four paragraphs.

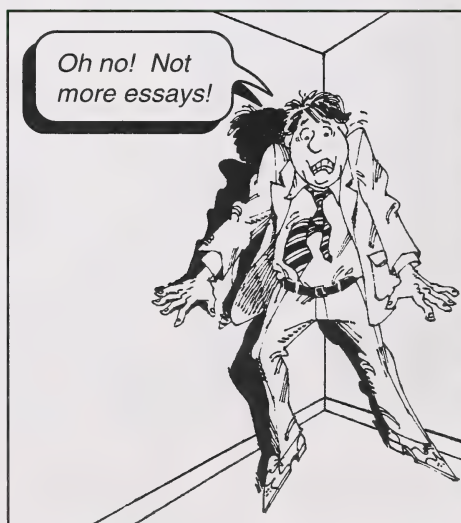
Activity 2: The Critical Essay – A Second Look



A Quick Review

In earlier modules of this course you worked on developing your essay-writing skills – most notably in Module 2, Section 5. In this activity you'll get a chance to develop those skills further by applying them to what you've learned about drama (and, in particular, about *The Glass Menagerie*). All this will culminate in a Section 3 Assignment and a Final Module Assignment in which you'll be able to write short critical (or analytical) essays on an aspect of the play you've been studying.

In Module 1 an *essay* was defined as *a short piece of nonfictional writing in which an author presents a viewpoint on a subject in a personal way*. Put more simply, an essay is an “attempt” (French *essai*) by one individual to set out clearly his or her thoughts on a particular subject – an attempt to focus attention on a concern that the writer wishes to explain in some depth.



Normally people would expect anyone who decided to talk or write on a particular topic to have strong feelings about that topic; and further, they'd hope that that person had thought his or her way properly through the situation before taking up the reader's time to present it. An essay should begin, then, by focusing the reader's attention on the matter clearly. Such a clear statement of focus is called, as you'll recall from Module 2, a *thesis statement*, and usually the thesis statement occurs in the introduction to an essay to help move the reader in line with the intentions of the writer.

If coming up with a good thesis statement is something that gives you problems, review the last section of Module 2; then do the Extra Help for this section (the one you're working on now).



Developing Your Arguments



Once the essay writer has clearly identified his or her intentions in the introduction (and this means being interesting enough to grab the reader's attention), it's time to develop the arguments in their best and most compelling order. It's a bit like presenting a case in a courtroom. As writer you, the defence attorney, must set out to the jury members what you intend to do, at the same time showing them by your convictions just how much you believe in your position. Then you must set out your evidence as brilliantly as you're able. Finally, in a flourish of rhetorical glory (which you alone can bring about) you deliver your summations to the jury, proving beyond any conceivable doubt that your client is innocent and that a great injustice is about to be perpetrated. The courtroom echoes with the vibration of your closing remarks and the jury retires.

A well-written essay can provoke just this kind of power and enthusiasm. It's the clear evidence of an agile and capable mind at work. Its chief components are a thorough preparation, a well-formulated approach, a clarity of intention, a wealth of impressive evidence, and a forcefulness of conclusion.

And now the jury retires; can there be any doubt!

Terms and Concepts

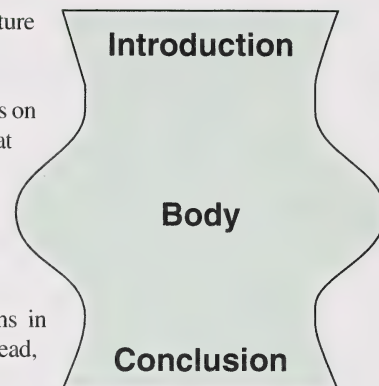
Now all of this should be familiar to you; it's included chiefly to refresh your memory and to get you into the correct "essay-writing mode." To that end, it would be a good idea at this point to go back and review what you learned about writing a critical essay in Section 5 of Module 2 – and, perhaps, what you've studied about writing in any of the preceding modules. Here are some terms and concepts with which you should be sure you're familiar:

- critical essay
- drafting
- editing
- literary criticism
- organizing principle
- prewriting
- revising
- thesis
- thesis statement
- transitions
- transitional expressions

As you know, traditionally students have been taught to structure their essays in the classic vase shape.

However, if you feel comfortable experimenting with variations on this pattern, don't feel restricted to it. What's important is that your essay do what you want it to do – convey your ideas in a clear, logical, and interesting manner. Still, most writers of critical essays do use something approximating the vase-shaped format.

Since you've already practised introductions and conclusions in earlier modules, you won't be doing that sort of thing here. Instead, you'll be concentrating on the body of your essay



The Body Paragraphs

In a traditional critical essay you'll have presented your thesis in the introduction; it's in the body of the essay that you'll set out to prove that thesis.

Achieving Unity

Topic sentence:
the sentence in a paragraph that contains the main idea of that paragraph

In a traditional essay each body paragraph has a **topic sentence** that relates back to the thesis. To develop an idea or topic is to make it more specific – to provide examples that clarify the idea, to add details which bring the idea to life, to supply evidence which validates the idea. Without such development your essay will be vague, lifeless, and unconvincing.

Unity: in writing, the relation of every detail in a paragraph to the topic sentence

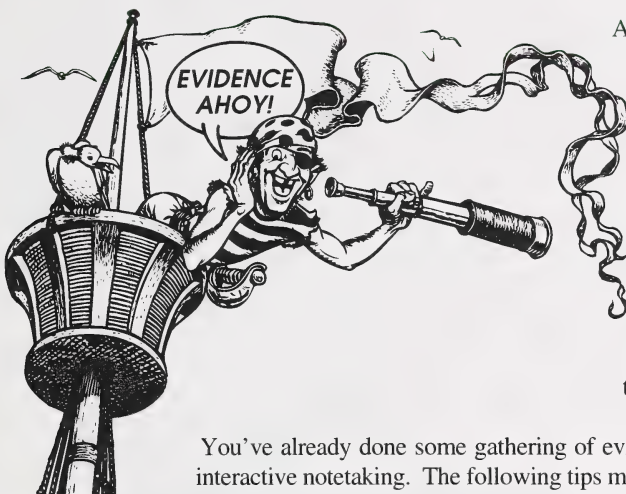
A topic sentence can occur anywhere in a paragraph, but it's important that every other sentence in the paragraph relates clearly to that sentence. If this doesn't occur, the principle of **unity** has been violated and you'll end up with an unclear, rambling paragraph. Just as an essay must have a specific focus dictated by its thesis, so each paragraph must develop a single topic or idea and present it as a unified whole.

Following is a paragraph that lacks unity. Rewrite it so that it clearly has a single focus. You may omit extraneous information, change sentence subjects, or do anything that you feel necessary to bring unity into the paragraph.

My favourite summer activity is canoeing. I like swimming a lot too, though, and hiking. My family has a sixteen-foot fibreglass canoe that we take to the lake whenever we go, along with all the other equipment we need for life up there – tent, campstove, supplies, and so on – and my brother and I spend a lot of time on the lake in it. We generally stick close to shore and explore all the nooks and crannies of the shoreline, trying to spot wildlife. When Mother sees us returning, she always has a delicious meal ready that we can smell even before we hit the beach – usually fish that she's caught herself, because she's the fisherman in the family. (Dad can't bring himself to kill anything, even fish.) My dream, though, is to get my own twelve-foot cedar-strip canoe so I can go out by myself. They're awfully expensive, but I'll get one someday.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.

Finding and Organizing Evidence



Any essay requires specific evidence to support its thesis. A critical essay (sometimes also called an *analytical essay*) is no exception.

In each of the essays you'll be writing you'll want to use evidence from the play to support a particular opinion you've expressed as your thesis.

How do you find and evaluate the "right" evidence that will convince the reader that your opinion is valid?

You've already done some gathering of evidence in earlier modules, along with interactive notetaking. The following tips may also be of help.

- Write down your thesis statement at the top of a clean sheet of paper. Then below it write the main idea of each of the body paragraphs of your essay down one side of the page. Opposite each main idea begin writing page references and very brief line references from the piece of literature you're analysing which provide evidence for that idea. Here's an example:

Thesis: In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom's conflict is between his responsibility to his family and his need to escape, which causes much tension in the family.

Main idea:

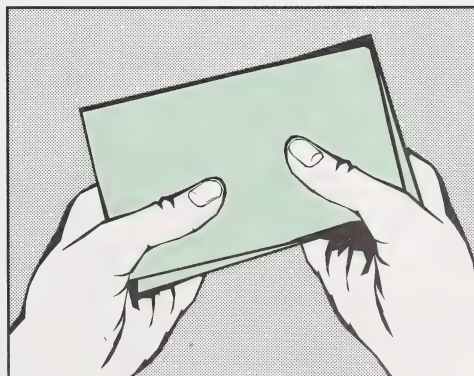
Tom's need to escape leads him to do things of which Amanda doesn't approve.

Evidence:

- page 65 – books
- page 66 – Amanda's first speech, Tom's last
- page 71 – human instinct

Once you've done this for each main point you want to make, you'll have a thorough idea of how the body of your essay will be structured and what evidence you'll refer to.

- Some students, especially when they're writing lengthy essays, like to transfer all the passages they've gathered onto cards – one passage per card. These students find that properly ordered cards are much easier to work with than dozens of scraps of paper. Then they organize the passages according to their order of importance. At this point it may be necessary to reject some passages (knowing what evidence to cull is an important skill for the essay writer), but it's a good idea not to throw them out just yet; you never know.



- Once you've arranged your passages by order of importance, your organization will be complete. Now all that remains to do is to write them up in unified paragraphs with clear topic sentences.

Anticipating Opposition

Whenever you write a critical or analytical essay, you should anticipate opposition; that is, you should think ahead and predict what criticism will likely be levelled at your thesis and prepare for it.

Suppose, for example, that you want to prove that a movie you recently saw is worthy of an Academy Award. You want to convince your parents that they should see it, but you know they won't be sympathetic listeners. Try anticipating what their opposition will be; then counter their arguments. That's a common, effective technique. For example, they may not like one of the actors. You could start by saying "I realize you don't like Stella Star because of her private life, but you should try not to let that colour your view of her acting," or "You may think the movie is too violent, but its message is that we have to work toward peaceful solutions for our problems – something with which I think you'd agree."



You can do the same thing when writing an analytical essay. For example, you may wish to show that Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* is a sympathetic character. But others will think she's too weak willed. You may begin by saying something like this:

Certainly Laura seems incapable of dealing with the real world. However, she has been dominated by her mother all her life and her determination to hold onto her glass menagerie shows that she has a certain strength. It simply needs to be channelled in a different direction.

You may choose not to use this method of anticipating opposition for your essay. Just remember that it's available and is often effective. Remember, too, that your teacher will likely be mentally criticizing your arguments when marking your essay.

Your Essay

Your assignments for this section and for the Final Module Assignment will include writing critical essays. If you bear in mind all you've studied about essay writing, these assignments shouldn't be a problem. It might help to review what you've learned in previous modules about writing effective introductions and conclusions, but the most important thing is that you clearly present and define a thesis. And remember, an essay shouldn't be just a mechanical thing; it's a personal piece of writing expressing your own views; let your own style – your "voice" – come through in your writing.

Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

Extra Help

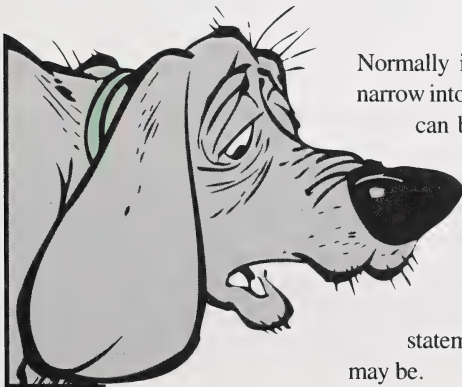
Students sometimes have problems with thesis statements. If you have trouble coming up with and formulating (clearly wording) a thesis statement, here are a few things to remember:

- The thesis is the central idea that you want to make in an essay. It's like a topic sentence for the whole essay.
- A strong thesis helps you organize the essay because all the body paragraphs will be providing evidence to support the thesis.
- A thesis should be neither too broad nor too narrow. If you make the thesis too broad, you'll be unable to deal with it adequately in one essay. You may have to write a book. Here are some examples of theses that are too broad:
 - **The economy is in bad shape.**
 - **Canada has an interesting history.**
 - **Movies are interesting.**

By contrast, if you make your thesis too narrow, you'll have little to say about it. Here are some examples of theses that are rather too narrow:

- **My dog sleeps too much.**
- **Mosquitoes are terrible pests.**
- **My car has great power.**

You'd be able to write a paragraph about each of these topics, but it would take a very skilled writer to turn any of them into interesting essays.



Normally it's not hard to turn a thesis that's too broad or too narrow into something acceptable. "The economy is in bad shape" can become "The introduction of the GST has made life more difficult for single-income families." "My dog sleeps too much" can become "Valdy, my basset hound, enriches my life despite his bad habits."

Correct each of the remaining bad examples of thesis statements by making them broader or narrower as the case may be.

1. **Canada has an interesting history.**
2. **Movies are interesting.**
3. **Mosquitoes are terrible pests.**
4. **My car has great power.**

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Extra Help.

At the end of Activity 2 you were asked to find your own “voice” – to let your own style come through in your writing (*voice* is a term you should remember from Module 1).

Remember, your style of writing is unique. Nobody else writes exactly as you do. But just what does writing style include? If you’re uncertain of this, here are some of the principal elements of style:



- **Diction:** Your choice of words and level of language should be determined by the subject of the essay, your audience, and the extensiveness of your vocabulary.
- **Sentence length:** Long sentences tend to flow fairly smoothly. Too many long sentences, however, slow down the rhythm and may cause the reader to lose interest or get confused. Short sentences tend to speed up the rhythm, but too many short sentences in a row make the reading choppy.
- **Sentence variety:** A knowledge and careful use of the different types of sentences will make your writing more interesting. You may need to refer to your writer’s handbook to review sentence types.
- **Your attitude and experience:** You carry to your essay a wide range of experience and a certain attitude toward the subject. These will help shape the way you write.

Now here are some tips on improving your writing style. Remember, writing is a complex task. It’s only through extensive practice and a positive attitude that you’ll learn to become a polished writer.

- **Avoid wordiness.** Most students are too wordy. They believe that using six words is better than using one, even though using one would be effective. George Orwell, that most idealistic of writers, had this to say about wordiness: “If it’s possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.”
- **Vary your sentence length.** Do this not just for the sake of variety, of course, but for interest and emphasis. Many students write sentences that are too long. Yet perhaps one of the most famous and effective sentences in the English language (and the shortest text in the Bible) is just two words: “Jesus wept.” The prudent use of short sentences is arresting; sometimes a short sentence acts as an exclamation point. Try it.
- **Vary your sentence type.** Try compound and compound-complex sentences, balanced and parallel structures, and inverted sentences. If you use just one or two types of sentences, the rhythm of your writing sags. As stated previously, you may have to refer to a writer’s handbook to review sentence types.

- Use specific diction. Don't use an abstract word when a concrete word is better (and a concrete word is almost always better). Don't say you had cereal for breakfast; rather, say "This morning I ate three bowls of Chocolate Sugar Bombs."
- Avoid big words when small ones would do as well. "Jesus was lachrymose" just doesn't have the same punch as "Jesus wept."
- Use the active voice. The active voice means that the subject is doing the action. The passive voice means the subject is receiving the action. The active voice is more lively and therefore more interesting. Here are some examples:

Weak: The cars were brought to a shrieking halt. (passive voice)

Emphatic: The cars shrieked to a halt. (active)

Weak: Lloyd was provoked by Mario.

Emphatic: Mario provoked Lloyd.



- Try to get rid of the expressions "there is" and "there are." For example, don't say "There were five cars in the driveway." Say "Five cars sat in the driveway."

These are just some techniques with which you can improve your writing. Naturally many books have been written about style. The preceding points provide you with a very brief look at improving your style. If you pay attention to a different one each time you write, your style will improve. In the final analysis, though, the best way to improve your writing is simply to write – and to read good literature.

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following ideas.

1. Go back to an earlier example of your own writing in English 20 – perhaps to something in your Writing Folder. Rewrite the piece applying as many of the style tips as you can to that writing. You'll probably note an improvement in your style.
2. Try emulating (that is, copying) the style of one of your favourite authors, or of an author you studied in *Literary Experiences*. Try a page or two.

Enrichment

WRITING FOLDER

In your Writing Folder respond to the following ideas.

1. Write a letter to Tom, Amanda, or Laura which gives advice about how that character should live his or her life. Assume that you'll give advice from the perspective of your own values as you live your life in your own modern society.
2. Rewrite part of Scene 8, this time providing a happy ending of your choosing. Resolve everyone's conflicts. After all, who is this Betty anyway? She's not even on stage! Why should she get Jim? Would you like to spend the rest of your life working in a shoe warehouse? What happened to all of Amanda's gentleman callers? Surely one of them could look her up – someone rich!

If you ever get a chance to see a production of *The Glass Menagerie*, be sure to take advantage of it. See if your perception of the play is similar to that of the director responsible for the production you attend. *The Glass Menagerie* has been made into a feature film at least three times – in 1950, 1973, and 1987. If you get a chance to see any (or all?) of these movies, don't miss it. If you do manage to see more than one of them, compare and see which you think is better. Was each remake an improvement?

Conclusion

In Section 3 you studied *The Glass Menagerie* more intensively than in Section 2, learning about such things as character relationships, motif, symbol, and theme. You learned that all the characters are attempting to escape something deep within themselves; all have different means of escape. The conclusion of the play doesn't leave the reader/viewer with much hope for the happiness of any of the characters, but don't let the ending get to you too much. It is possible to find happiness. Tennessee Williams happens to be a playwright who had very little in his own life, and he reflected this in his plays.

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Section 3 Assignment: Critiquing The Play

Review the Evaluation information found in the introductory pages of this module.

It is important to number and clearly identify each page with the following information at the top:

English 20 – Module 5

Section 3 Assignment

Page #

Name and ID #

Be sure to write legibly. Leave a wide left margin and number all of your pages.

1. Select a key passage from *The Glass Menagerie*. In a short composition of about two pages explain why the passage is a key one. Refer to specific details and use quotations to explain the importance of the passage in developing character, conflict, mood, and/or theme.

Note: Do not use the passages that were used as models in the module.

You may, if you wish, select two passages and compare them, but be sure you make it clear why both are key passages. Be sure you clearly identify the passage(s) you're discussing.

2. Do **either** Part A **or** Part B.

Part A

Symbols in *The Glass Menagerie* help make the play effective .

In a short essay of about three pages discuss the effectiveness of symbols in the play.

Note: If you discuss all the symbols you can think of, your essay will resemble a shopping list. Choose a few significant symbols.

Part B

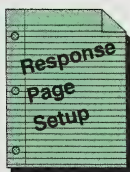
A drama critic once said of Tennessee Williams that in his plays he is concerned about "unfortunate characters who try to create and preserve ideal images of themselves as pathetic defences against the frustration or shipwreck of their lives."

In a short essay of about three pages pick **one** of the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* and show how that character does or does not illustrate this concern of Williams.

Hint: When writing your essay take care to do the following:

- Develop an effective introduction and conclusion.
- Be sure you have a clear thesis statement.
- Be sure you have clear topic sentences in your body paragraphs.
- Use specific evidence from the play to support your opinions.

Be careful when doing question 2 to indicate clearly whether you're doing Part A or Part B.



MODULE SUMMARY



The focus of Module 5 has been the modern play. You've learned something about how a play is directed and staged. You've also read a play quite closely, examining such things as organization, motif, symbol, character, and theme. You've also looked at some differences between the play and television and film. Finally, you've done some work on the critical, or analytical, essay, and connected it to the play you've studied – *The Glass Menagerie*.

The hope is that you'll be able to apply what you've learned about plays and films to your future experiences watching plays and movies. If you do, these experiences should be more rewarding and pleasurable.

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Final Module Assignment

Review the Evaluation information found in the introductory pages of this module.

It is important to number and clearly identify each page with the following information at the top:

English 20 – Module 5 Final Module Assignment Page # Name and ID #

Be sure to write legibly. Leave a wide left margin and number all of your pages.

Plays present people in conflict with themselves, with other people, and/or with the world in which they live. As a result of conflict, many people change or develop. They aren't the same at the end of the play as they were at the beginning. Other people, however, remain static; that is, they do not change no matter how much they would like to.

Choose a character from *The Glass Menagerie*, and in an essay of about three pages show how that character changed or remained the same as a result of conflict.

You will be marked on the following criteria:

- a clear thesis
- use of specific detail
- organization
- diction and sentence structure
- mechanics – spelling, punctuation, grammar


To ensure that all your work has been completed in a satisfactory manner, check off the items in the following list:

- ☐ Section 1 Assignment has been completed.
- ☐ Section 2 Assignment has been completed.
- ☐ Section 3 Assignment has been completed.
- ☐ Final Module Assignment has been completed.
- ☐ Your responses are organized and neat, with room for teacher comments.
- ☐ All your response pages are numbered consecutively and identified with this heading:

English 20 – Module 5 Section # Assignment Page # Name and ID #

Submit **only** your **assignment response pages** (along with any audiotape and/or videotape cassettes) for evaluation.

Appendix

	Glossary
	Activities
	Extra Help
	Enrichment

Glossary

allusion: in literature, a reference to someone or something with which the writer assumes the audience will be familiar

chronological order: the order in time in which events actually occur

high-angle shot: a camera shot in which the camera is placed above the subject

low-angle shot: a camera shot in which the camera is placed low in relation to the subject

monotone: lacking expression and variety of intonation

motif: an idea or image that recurs throughout a piece of literature

pan shot: a camera shot in which the camera is moved from one side of a scene to the other

playwright: the writer of a play

props: in drama, the objects held and used by actors

protagonist: the main character in a story or play

set: in drama, the arrangement of a stage

splicing: joining two pieces of film

telephoto lens: a lens that acts as a telescope to magnify distant objects

topic sentence: the sentence in a paragraph that contains the main idea of that paragraph

unity: in writing, the relation of every detail in a paragraph to the topic sentence

wide-angle lens: a lens with a wide field view, which creates the illusion of depth

zoom: adjust the camera lens during a shot to increase or

Suggested Answers

Section 1: Activity 1

1. Responses will vary. Here are a few ideas:

- Both try to get the reader/audience emotionally involved.
- Both may get you thinking about important ideas.
- Both can move backward and forward in time.
- Both usually follow a traditional plot structure.

2. Responses will vary. Here are some ideas:

- A play involves many more people than the characters on stage – for example, the director, stage manager, set designer and builders, sound and lighting technicians, costume designers, and audience. A novel, by contrast, is usually written by one person.
- A play is oral; that is, the way the lines are spoken is crucial to the understanding of the play. Sound effects and music are also very important.
- A play is visual; how the members of the cast move, what they look like, how they dress, and how they relate to one another and to the set are important. The set design is also important.
- The relationship between the members of the cast and the audience often influences how you feel about a play. If the audience is involved and has a great deal of energy, you'll probably enjoy the play more than you would if you noticed a lack of energy (that is, if the audience and/or the cast were "flat").

- A director shapes the script according to his or her understanding and vision of the playwright’s intentions.
- Characters on stage are revealed by what they do, by what they say and how they say it, by what others say to and about them, by how they relate to others, and by their appearance. A novelist, on the other hand, can take you inside the minds of the characters to reveal their innermost thoughts.

Section 1: Activity 2

1. Responses will vary. Here are a few possibilities:
- You’re unique. You’ve had different experiences from the other director. The way you see the world is different. You’ll bring part of your life to the play. You’ll also bring a certain emotional colouring that will affect how you interpret the play.
 - Each cast will be different. They’ll have different voices, different appearances, different movements, and different ways of delivering the lines.
 - While the set may be similar, there will certainly be important differences.
2. Responses will vary. A few possibilities are as follows:
- Both sound and lighting help to create and enhance the atmosphere of a play. For example, the music played before the curtain goes up can foreshadow whether the play will be serious or funny, happy or sad. It creates a certain feeling in the audience.
 - Sound and lighting can create suspense. For example, when the lights suddenly dim, and slow, deep music is played, the audience hopes the heroine doesn’t open that door.

Section 1: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

1. Charts will vary. Here’s one example with which you can compare your own:

	Audience	Performance	Other
Play	The audience is more involved and shares energy with the cast.	The performance varies each time it’s put on.	Sets and props can vary.
Novel	The “audience” is alone, enjoying the experience privately.	The “performance” is always the same.	Novels can’t be “updated” or set in different eras or milieus.
Movie	The viewers can interact with each other but not with the actors.	It never changes; it’s the same with each viewing.	Cameras can affect audience reaction.
Television Show	The audience is usually small, so there’s not much “energy.”	It, too, never changes.	The program competes with commercials for attention.

2. Your chart should look something like this:

	Roles and Responsibilities
Playwright	writes play; gives stage directions
Director	visualizes play; does all that's necessary to bring this vision into being
Stage Manager	finds props; sets schedule; organizes cast; carries out director's ideas
Cast	follows director's instructions; brings characters to life; learns lines; tries to appear believable and motivated
Lighting Designer	works with director to set lighting; arranges lights; sees that lighting ideas are carried out and that they work
Sound Designer	works with director to decide on music and special sound effects
Set Designer	works with director and stage manager to design set, acquire props, etc.
Costume Designer	works with director to design costumes and dress each character for his or her role

Enrichment

1. Responses will vary. An example follows for the first few lines:

(X and Y have been married for seventeen years. They have financial problems and are confused by their fifteen-year-old's behaviour.)

X (tired): I'm home.

Y (bored, coming into livingroom): It's nice to see you.

X (not really listening): You too. I had quite a day.

2. Responses will vary. However, you may have noted some of these points:

- A movie normally has to tell the story in two hours or less. So the movie's director has to change the plot to suit the time available.
- When you read the novel, you probably created a mental image of what the characters looked like. Naturally there will be differences between your image and the director's.
- By its nature a movie has to move; in other words, there normally has to be action occurring much of the time. That's not the case with a novel. So a director may have to create action scenes not found in the novel.
- The camera is extremely important. It can make you look at characters in ways you never considered when reading the novel.

3. Responses will vary. The important part of your answer is a clear explanation of why you chose the particular music. Was it to create a particular mood? If so, what was it?

Section 2: Activity 1

There are no suggested answers for this activity.

Section 2: Activity 2

1. Responses will vary. What's important here is that you become aware of the different possibilities along with their advantages and disadvantages. Using a straight chronological approach may be the most obvious choice, but it's not the only one.
2. Responses will, of course, vary, but your notes might look something like this:
 - at opening, grim reality of tenement life obvious – feeling of being trapped – dark, dingy, depressing
 - lighting to reveal inside of apartment after opening speech
 - here mood to soften; dreamlike quality – sense of unreality, or surrealism
 - more lighting here but not bright; soft, warm; interior old-fashioned; a bit cloying
 - father's portrait to contrast with everything else (He's smiling because he's escaped all this.)
 - dialogue to reveal tensions – especially between Tom and Amanda – but not outright hostility (Tom tolerates nagging because he does love his mother.)
 - Amanda to seem somewhat lost in past – regretful, romantic
 - overall feeling one of quiet desperation – understated but apparent; pessimistic
3. Answers will vary. An obvious advantage of so elaborate a setting is that it can be used to enhance the mood and atmosphere Williams desired. Also, different parts of the stage can be revealed or hidden for different scenes. A disadvantage would be the time it would take to set the stage, not to mention the effort involved in staging the play at all – or of taking it on the road.
4. Textbook question 2:

Responses will vary. Here's one with which you can compare your own:

Using Tom as narrator is effective in that it gives the playwright an excellent way to provide background information quickly and easily. It's clear when Tom steps in and out of the play, so confusion is avoided. Also, Tom's speaking directly to the audience helps involve the playwatchers and establishes an empathy for Tom's position.

Textbook question 6:

Near the beginning of Scene 2 Amanda learns the truth about Laura's business-school attendance; here she seems to face up to reality – the loss of the tuition money and the fact that her daughter seems incapable of making her way in the world. By contrast, she slips into a world of illusion and self-deception at the thought of a gentleman caller coming to visit Laura; she fools herself into believing that her daughter will be rescued by a "white knight."

Textbook question 9:

Scene 4 has a number of symbols of escape. Here are the principal ones:

- the magician's escape from the coffin
- the fire escape
- the gentleman caller (Amanda's dream of an escape route for Laura)

Section 2: Activity 3

Textbook question 14:

Tom, in his grace, thanks God for “all Thy mercies,” yet the family, from what the audience sees, has little for which to be thankful.

Textbook question 15:

Answers will vary somewhat, but in this scene Laura definitely reveals her own unique personality. She shows herself to be a quiet, sincere, sweet-natured young woman, not at all like her talkative, rather overbearing mother.

Textbook question 16:

Jim calls Laura an “old-fashioned type of girl” and tells her she’s too shy. He does try to build up her self-confidence, but he doesn’t seem to realize just how different Laura is from most young women. Laura won’t be changed just by trying to talk more and coming out of her shell, but Jim isn’t sensitive to this.

All this seems to show that Jim is himself a superficial, ordinary young man, incapable of understanding or helping Laura. He’s caught up in himself and the past, and ends up by shattering Laura’s unicorn and her hopes.

Section 2: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

1. Tom likely means that the play will reveal truths about life and the human condition, even though the play itself is fictional and set up as a series of memories. Other ideas?
2. The play is a memory, and in any memory much detail would be out of place. The surreal, dreamlike quality of the play is maintained by techniques like these.
3. The victrola is a means of escape for Laura. When the real world threatens, she instinctively reaches for the victrola.
4. Responses will likely vary. It’s an unusual idea – blue roses – and Laura’s an unusual girl. Also, the nickname continues the connotations of sadness (blue) with delicate beauty (roses). This seems most fitting for Laura.
5. The picture of Tom’s father – someone who did escape – is lit up on the stage.
6.
 - a. Amanda associates it with low, vulgar behaviour; it’s the animalistic side of human nature.
 - b. Amanda was deserted by a man who followed his instincts; no doubt this explains her feelings, at least in part.
7. Jim shows himself to be just an ordinary young man caught up in the culture of the moment. He probably also wants to look modern and up-to-date.
8. Amanda, remember, is a romantic who glories in memories of her own early years and her many gentlemen callers. She becomes so excited at the prospect of a caller for Laura that she seems in a way almost to forget that it’s her daughter, not herself, the caller’s coming for; she begins to act, and to dress, as she did when she was entertaining her callers. All this reinforces the problems Amanda has dealing with reality.
9. Tom tells the audience that he’s still tormented by thoughts of his sister and guilt for having left her.

Enrichment

1. Responses will vary. The key is to experiment with different ways of reading. Did you enjoy coming up with different interpretations of the scene?
2. Did you try to make use of some of the camera techniques you learned in Section 1? For example, a close-up of Tom's face might reveal an internal conflict. If you're filming a conversation, try to film it from different angles as an experiment.

Section 3: Activity 1

1. Responses will vary somewhat. Here are a few ideas with which you can compare your own:
 - Money – or the lack of it – seems to be a motif. It reinforces the financial difficulties of the Wingfields.
 - Escape is a motif. Tom's father escaped and eventually so does Tom. Laura and Amanda both escape by slipping into fantasy worlds.
 - The movies are a motif. Tom escapes to the movies – the closest he can get to the life of adventure he longs for until he finally breaks away.
 - References are constantly made to Laura's being "crippled," a motif that has broader implications than Laura's physical disability. The whole family is "crippled" in a much more significant sense.
 - The music from the Paradise Dance Hall acts as a unifying motif throughout the play, as does the music from Laura's phonograph.
 - The use of lighting in various forms is a very important motif. As Tom notes in his first monologue, "Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted." So the play is dimly lit throughout. Other types of lighting include lamplight, the light from the Paradise Dance Hall, moonlight, candlelight, and even lightning (at the end of the play Tom says "...nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura." Also, at dinner when the gentleman caller arrives, all the lights go out.

Did you think of other motifs? Often it's hard to distinguish symbols from motifs. Motifs are usually broader ideas or subjects creating a unifying thread in a literary work.

2. Responses may vary somewhat. Compare yours to the points that follow.
 - The coffin seems to symbolize Tom's entrapment in family responsibilities. Tom was impressed that the magician could get out of the coffin without removing one nail. Tom is also in a coffin, but he can't escape from it because the nail he has to remove is the responsibility he feels toward Laura and Amanda. To do so would hurt them both.
 - Amanda's husband "fell in love with long distance" and deserted the family. He was charming and handsome, but unreliable. He seems to represent the romantic concept of the gentleman caller; he also symbolizes something of what Tom would like – adventure and escape. He's the role model that Tom longs to follow and that Amanda hopes he won't follow.
 - Jim, the gentleman caller, is, as Tom says in his first speech, a symbol of "the long delayed but always expected something that we live for." For Amanda, Jim seems to symbolize the hope of a happy future for Laura. Initially that is not what Laura hopes (she is too terrified), but when Jim dances with her, then kisses her, she too has hope. The gentlemen callers of Amanda's youth probably symbolize a lost romanticism that Amanda hopes to recapture for Laura. Perhaps she wants to relive those years through Laura's gentleman caller.
 - Money symbolizes future contentment for Amanda. She often criticizes Tom for not earning enough to support the family. So in a way the money might be said to symbolize more imprisonment for Tom.

- The glass menagerie consists of fragile glass animals that reflect the light. Laura, too, is fragile and reflects a soft light. As Laura says, “Glass breaks so easily.” The glass unicorn is unique for its horn and its mythical world. Laura, too, is unique and has created her own illusionary world. The horn is broken off when Jim clumsily hits the table while he and Laura are dancing. Now that the horn is gone, the unicorn is no longer unique; it’s “less-freakish!” At this moment Laura feels like everyone else; now she feels “more at home.” The dance and the kiss are the high point of Laura’s life. Sadly, though, the breaking of the unicorn foreshadows the shattering of her hopes when Jim leaves for Betty.
 - Other symbols might include the typewriter, Jim’s big shadow, Paradise Dance Hall, Blue Mountain, the warehouse, the dining room, Laura’s leg, and the blue roses. You should consider what these things might symbolize. Can you think of any others?
3. Responses here will, of course, vary. If you were able to discuss your passages with other students, did you find that you benefited by sharing their ideas? Did you tend to agree or disagree with what others had to say?

Remember, one of your assignments will involve analysing a key passage in a short critical composition. Be sure to look for a passage that reveals something important about character, mood, and/or theme. If necessary, refer back to the discussion of passages that reveal Amanda’s character (under the subheading “Key Passages and Character Development”) as a model.

4. Responses will vary as there is no one correct way to state the theme. However, the following formulations incorporate the major conflicts in the play:
- In the introduction to Scene 1 Williams states that the buildings are “burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation.” So a theme may be that no matter how people try, sometimes they cannot improve their situation however desperate they are to do so. Certainly Amanda and Tom are prime examples. Both wish desperately for a happier future, but they don’t seem to get it. Laura, too, is desperate to escape from the real world, although once she tastes a bit of it with Jim, she may wish to be a part of it. Jim also has an air of desperation. Six years after high school he hasn’t amounted to much despite his early promise. He’s taking various courses, but one wonders if his shadow will always be bigger than he is.
 - Many people live lives of illusion. People must learn to deal with the real world. Tom, as narrator, says that he gives “truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.” All the characters live illusory lives: Amanda often lives in the past with her seventeen gentlemen callers; Tom escapes to the movies, a world of flickering, illusive, artificial screen images (he wants to be the magician); Laura’s illusory world is her menagerie and her music; Jim’s illusive world is taken up with self-improvement courses. Even the Paradise Dance Hall offers only the illusion of romance and excitement.
 - People trapped by circumstance – poverty, crushing family responsibilities, and so on – need understanding and sympathy. The destruction of dreams of an improved life and the acceptance of failure can be devastating. People experiencing such a destruction – and there are many of them – deserve the compassion of others.

Your ideas on the theme of *The Glass Menagerie* may be different; the important thing is that you can defend them.

Section 3: Activity 2

Responses will vary. Here’s one example in which the paragraph has been unified simply by deleting information (note that the topic sentence is about canoeing, not camping).

My favourite summer activity is canoeing. My family has a sixteen-foot fibreglass canoe that we take to the lake whenever we go, and my brother and I spend a lot of time on the lake in it. We generally stick close to shore and explore all the nooks and crannies of the shoreline, trying to spot wildlife. My dream, though, is to get my own twelve-foot cedar-strip canoe so I can go out by myself. They’re awfully expensive, but I’ll get one someday.

Section 3: Follow-up Activities

Extra Help

Responses will vary. Here are examples of acceptable thesis statements.

1. "Canada has an interesting history" could become "Settlers in Alberta faced many hardships in the 1890s," or "David Thompson's exploration of the west was heroic." The possibilities are endless.
2. "Movies are interesting" could become "Steven King's novels have been made into frightening movies," or "Some science fiction films ask fascinating questions."
3. "Mosquitoes are terrible pests" could become "Mosquitoes are just a few of the pests that make life miserable for Albertans," or "While mosquitoes are terrible pests, they are part of an interesting food chain."
4. "My car has great power" could become "The ZAP'S speed is just one of the features that made me buy it," or "Compared to the Petunia, the ZAP is a super car."

Any of these thesis statements could be developed and supported in an essay.

Enrichment

There are no suggested answers for this activity.



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English 20

Student Module Booklet

Module 5

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